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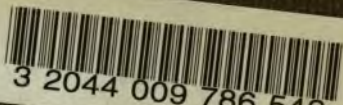
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That millions of strange shadows on you tend?”

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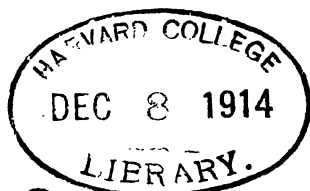
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# ARTHUR CONINGSBY.

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## CHAPTER I.

SOMEWHAT less than ten years before the close of the last century, Arthur Coningsby awoke one fine summer morning, and found himself in an antique chamber, and shaded by the curtains of a quaintly ornamented bed. His dreams had been of objects different from those which now surrounded him ; of mysteries, and glories, and bright eyes, and headlong excitements. It required a few moments' thought to

bring him from the visions that at three and twenty very commonly possess the slumberer, and to give him a clear consciousness of his actual position. He gradually remembered that he had arrived late in the previous evening on a visit to Mr. Barrington, owner of Deerhill, and member of Parliament for the county.

Arthur had made a long journey on the day before, but he was now completely refreshed, and rose eagerly to look around him on objects which he had not seen for several years. The room was small and circular, and evidently formed a story of a tower. The window afforded a prospect of a richly wooded and varied park, stretching down to a river, which on one side of the landscape widened into an arm of the sea. The young man dressed with the utmost speed, and in half an

hour was in the midst of the garden which lay at the rear of the mansion.

The building was regular and handsome, though of an obsolete architecture, and bearing the marks of genuine age. He walked round the garden, and reached a broad terrace which on one side divided it from the park. Before him lay a delightful view. The old trees stretched their arms over the grassy undulations on which the deer fed and glanced with waving antlers, between the massy stems, and among the deep sylvan shadows. Suddenly he saw a considerable herd of them advancing from the opposite side of the river. When they had nearly reached its bank, they rushed forward with long bounds, and dashed into the water; their horns tossed gallantly above the stream, which flashed and sparkled round them,

and as dripping and eager they gained the bank, they coursed away across the lawn, and through the shade of a large clump of oaks.

Arthur was observing the beautiful animals with idle interest, when he heard, not far away, cries of delight from young voices, and turning, saw two children, who shouted and clapped their hands with glee, at the spectacle of the graceful and vigorous stags breaking across the sunny waters. When the joyous pair discovered that a stranger was watching them, their loud mirth suddenly ceased, and they began to retreat along the terrace to a picturesque summer-house of carved stone, which stood at the other end. Arthur regretted that he had interrupted their merriment, and followed them in the hope of making acquaintance with them. One

seemed to be a bright-eyed girl of eight or ten, and the other a rosy-cheeked boy some two or three years younger.

They entered the summer-house through a door overhung with clematis, jasmine, and honeysuckle. It opened in a different side of the little building from that which Arthur was approaching, and which exhibited a pointed and mullioned window of well-carved tracery. He walked in the footsteps of the children, but started at seeing that he was not only in their presence, but also in that of a lady evidently but a few years younger than himself. She was dressed in deep mourning, and held a book, while her face was turned to the landscape, seen through a large and ramified arch, and resembling a magnificent picture in a sculptured frame. As she rose, Arthur apologised for his intru-



sion ; with a grave inclination of the head, and calm politeness, she replied to him in language which, though pure and elegant English, was pronounced with a foreign accent. He explained, that supposing he had frightened the children who were now beside her, he had come thither only for the purpose of attempting to reassure them. At this moment the breakfast-bell rang, and he attended her and them to the house.

He would have sought to enter into conversation with her; but there was something in her look so totally alien from ordinary topics that he remained in reluctant silence. Her features were regular and striking, and her dark grey eyes could not conceal their splendour. But there was an utter absence of all bloom in her complexion, of all lightness and

sparkle in her expression. Her brow seemed laden with a fixed weight, and there was a rigidity like that of iron in her closed lips. Yet the soft clearness of her skin, and the rounded and elastic delicacy of her form, indicated that her age was under twenty. Her dress and hair, alike sable, were arranged with severe simplicity. Her countenance and manner were impressed with the marks of asceticism and sorrow, thought and courage, which, though beheld through the softening medium of her sex, were unrelieved by a touch of gaiety, and divested of that endearing charm, the tendency of women to lean and repose on those around them. The children ran merrily on before, while she maintained her silence; and Arthur thought himself on the point of making some remark which might draw her from

it, when they reached the entrance of the house.

A considerable party were assembled in the breakfast room, three of whom only were known to Arthur; Mr. Barrington, Lady Mary his wife, and Miss Barrington his niece. The two first he had sometimes seen in London during the Parliamentary season. The last was by her mother's side his cousin, as by her father's she was niece to Mr. Barrington, and her he had known from his infancy. The boy and girl whom he had seen on the terrace were, as he now learned, the children of Mr. Barrington's only daughter; and the lady in black was a French emigrant, and governess to the elder of them. The rest of the company were a Mr. Vernon, a young man in a public office, vain of his intellect, and much vainer of his manners

and person ; one or two nameless country gentlemen, taking an equal interest in politics and sporting ; and a clergyman, the Reverend Mr. Marshall, with nothing distinctive either in his character or talents. Besides these were several other compounds of follies, tempers, accomplishments, and affectations, with two or three specimens of modest and graceful excellence.

Arthur was kindly received, and soon established himself pleasantly beside his fair cousin. The rosy, dark-eyed, open-hearted girl seemed to love nothing better than to talk with him about all she disliked, admired, or ridiculed, and to know that he would understand her, and if he pleased, could amuse her in return. "O! Arthur," she began, "you have no notion how glad I am that you are come ;

I have been wanting you very much all this week past. Mr. Marshall was shocked at my saying that I am sure Milton must have been a good man; and so I am excommunicated. And Mr. Vernon will not admire a delightful old woman I have found out. And so I have to walk to her cottage every day without any one to protect me from the cows; any tame person I mean; Mr. Vernon is very tame. Sometimes every one goes boating, and leaves me, and then I have nothing for it except not exactly pulling caps, but discussing them and proposing reforms in them, with Lady Mary, or defending my Protestantism against Mademoiselle de Clainville. But she is a dear girl nevertheless."

Thus ran on the laughing Isabel, telling her sorrows with a tone of joy, and only

lowering her voice a little while she pronounced the names of the individuals near her.

Coningsby was gladdened by her presence, for it recalled to him many pleasant passages of his early life, and revived an affection no whit the less sincere, for partaking not at all of the enthusiasm or exclusiveness of love. It was many years since they had met for more than a few hours at a time ; and of late, although his attachment had not ceased, he had thought of her less often than before, for he had been violently borne away by the excitement arising from the French Revolution.

He had indeed been so strongly seized by the general fever, that much of his time, and almost all his more serious thoughts, had been devoted to the completion in his own mind of the great ideal

of good government and universal happiness, sketched by the French innovators, and in part embodied by their proceedings. During this period he had not seen his former companion, Isabel Barrington, nor had he very often recollected her. She had never been the object of his love; and the delight which he remembered her to have always taken in every-day circumstances, and ordinary means of enjoyment, and the charm which she had constantly flung around them, or extracted from them, had forbidden him ever to associate her image with his political dreams.

But although his attachment to her had been much interrupted, he received far more pleasure from her society than if that pleasure had been unmingled with recollections of the days when she was not a woman nor he a democrat. They spent

several hours of the morning together, and all the ladies of the party, except Lady Mary, were convinced before dinner that Isabel had an adoring and favoured lover in the handsome Arthur Coningsby. This surmise had more foundation than is usually thought necessary in such cases ; for though at this time the only mistress of Arthur's affections was the goddess of the rights of man, Isabel's feelings with regard to him were such as might readily have been changed by any effort on his part into the most devoted love.

The extravagant levity that she displayed on first addressing him, was the result of long forethought, by which she had gained resolution to assume an appearance of utter carelessness. But Coningsby, who was altogether unsuspecting of the real state of her mind, perceived that this gay



humour soon flagged, and he was entirely at a loss to account for the seeming capriciousness of her spirits. Neither could he at all comprehend the meaning of the sudden and striking differences which took place in her manner towards him. She was sometimes warmly affectionate, and then she would seem to recollect herself, and assume an air of constrained coldness. But the easy kindness and simple confidence of their previous intercourse never revived.

The morning of the second day which Arthur spent at Deerhill was marked by one of Isabel's most obstinately, listless, and almost repellent moods; and he was gratified by the startling change of tone with which she asked him whether he would accompany her, and others of the party, in a visit to the ruins of St. Edmund's

Abbey, which were at a distance of not more than two or three miles from Deerhill. Arthur readily consented; and it was arranged, that while Mr. Barrington and several of his guests should be conveyed in carriages, Isabel and her cousin, together with Mademoiselle de Clainville and Mr. Marshall, should walk to the ruins.

Their path led through the park, on the side nearest the river. The sod on which they stepped was green, flower-bestrown, and elastic; and they walked lightly forward, now in the shadow of great trees, and now in the sunshine of open glades. Arthur watched with admiration and pleasure the two beautiful and strongly contrasted forms of Agatha and Isabel. The one might have seemed, in her austere dignity, a Teutonic priestess, dwelling among forests of primeval oak,

and accustomed to look down on warriors and princes bending in awe at her feet, and to utter oracles which aroused or affrighted nations. But the other resembled more the fairy of a later day, singing with the lark in some primrose glen, or beheld for a moment in twilight thickets, by some wandering knight, true soldier of the cross, and champion of ladies' honour.

Their path had been nearly parallel to the river, though at a considerable distance from it, and they had caught only occasional glimpses of the sparkling water between the broad masses, and through the bending vistas of the park. They had now just emerged upon a common, at a point higher than most of the ground they had before traversed. Directly in their front lay a wide expanse of heath,

broken at no great distance by a glen, which was divided in all its length by a small and rapid brook rising out of the earth at their feet, and flowing after a hundred windings into the river. Below the common was a little irregular village, of a dozen brown thatched roofs, surrounded by orchards and coppice; and the space of some half-mile in breadth, between it and the larger stream, was occupied by green fields and waving corn land. A little farther from them, but still on the same side of the river, and very near its brink, were seen the grey ruins of St. Edmund's Abbey, with spiry buttresses and richly-shafted windows, which Nature seemed to have delighted in sheltering amid a grove of ancient trees. Beyond these remains the river widened into a noble sheet of water, which carried

away the eye to its junction with the sea, where ever and anon a white sail came gliding into view, and won the mind to float with it serenely forth even to the pale kingdoms of the horizon. The range of country beyond the stream was teeming and cheerful, diversified with all the hues of fertility, and with a soft embroidery of light and shade; nor did it want the living beauty of woodland, and the roofs and towers, which indicate, above all else, the intelligent dominion of man.

Tears almost came to the eyes of Agatha, and she said, "Happy England! you have still a nation and a government." The brow of Arthur darkened, and he thought, "Alas! that so fair a land should be in the talons of monarchy, aristocracy, and an exclusive church!"

The whole party soon arrived at the ruined abbey. The umbrageous path which they had followed wound through a thicket of trees and bushes, till it reached a low door opening into a large unornamented apartment, still darkened by a roof. From this a loftier archway admitted them to the main division of the ruins. They were standing at one end of what had been the abbey church; the lofty sides of dark grey stone, with green wreaths hiding every wound, and up which mounted the slender stems of pillars, now idle and uncrowned, stretched far away to meet the transverse wall with its large and branched window; the shafts and ornaments of this beautiful arch were closely overgrown with ivy, which might have been thought their natural produce; no portion of the glass

remained in it ; the roof had been destroyed for years, and several ash trees, sown by the winds in the area, seemed ancient inhabitants of the pile, and lifted their green summits almost to a level with the topmost walls. A thousand fragments of the broken and mouldered building were scattered upon the earth ; but enough remained for admiration and delight ; and though, in many places, the walls were divided as if by mighty rents, and in many crumbled into mounds, on which a wilderness of bushes and wild flowers had rooted itself, yet in others might be seen magnificent specimens of the original greatness and perfection of the whole. Through the wide breaks the massy buttresses of the exterior were visible ; and within, column, and gallery, and window, rose above each other tier on tier.

The party now dispersed themselves through the ruins wherever the humour of the individuals led them. There was a timid and blushing pleasure in the look with which Isabel again accepted Arthur's offered arm; and slowly and delightedly the two strayed on from one recess of the structure to another, or changed their point of view amid the surrounding woods. They had thus wandered for some time, and had returned to enjoy anew the main interior prospect, when Isabel thought she perceived through the foliage of a tree, which grew in one corner of the building, a brightly-tinted sparkle, as if the stately plant had borne a ruby for its fruit. They approached more closely to the spot till they stood beside the trunk, and discovered that in the window which the tree had concealed, a small fragment



of stained glass was yet remaining at the summit of an arch. It represented a rose of the most brilliant red, surrounded by yellow points, as if of a star, and beneath this a man's head, which still bore traces of youth and beauty. The rest of the glass was gone.

"Those symbols," said Arthur, "are the pentalfa, and the rose of the hermetic philosophers. Here is matter for a dozen dissertations. You may remember that, before I became a politician, or studied men's substantial rights and interests, I was a little inclined to these fooleries."

"Yes, I recollect too," answered Isabel, "that you once spoiled a drawing of mine, by scratching it all over with a variety of strange emblems and calculations, alchemical, I believe, and astrological."

"Until I discovered," he replied, "that the mere exercise, by every man, of his social rights would give human nature all it needs, I used to look for the elements of happiness in the strangest and most remote regions. A flame glowed at my feet, but I was obstinately bent on kindling my torch by fire from the clouds."

"Is it not possible, Arthur," she enquired, "that you are now mistaking a mere earthly will-o'-the-wisp for a star of heaven?"

"Nay," he replied, "I will not dispute it with you; neither am I going to tire you by recalling my ancient lore to explain yonder device; but I will tell you a story about a similar painting. For aught I know, it may relate to the very one we have been looking at. You shall judge for yourself:

“In one of our great English abbeys, long before the reformation, there was a young novice, whose rapid progress in learning, and skill as a musician, made him an especial favourite with the monks, his instructors. It was predicted by them that he would rise to the highest reputation in the church, and perhaps become a bishop, or even a cardinal. This praiseworthy youth was particularly delighted with the study of knotty and abstruse questions, and he sometimes proposed difficulties to the fathers, which it gave them no little trouble to answer. In these cases, Father Timothy, to whom he chiefly addressed himself, was accustomed to advise that Nicholas should cease to think of the subjects which perplexed him, and read his breviary with redoubled diligence. But the young man

was so unfortunate as to find great difficulty in turning away his mind from points which he did not understand, and Father Timothy could only lament that his pupil was harassed by the wiles of the devil.

“It happened that on a high festival of the church, Father Timothy preached a sermon to which the mind of his pupil gave its most earnest attention. But his eyes unhappily wandered to one of the windows in which were painted, as says the historian, the very figures we have just seen.

“The novice could not help meditating during the pauses of the discourse on these remarkable emblems. But he could form no conception of their meaning. He thought of them in the cloisters, and in his bed, but still he was completely at a loss. He next applied to his

instructor, but the only answer he could gain was a severe rebuke for attempting to be wise above that which is written. At last he spoke to an old lay-brother, who informed him of a tradition which he had heard in his youth with regard to what was called Abbot Ingulph's window. It was said that the stained glass was made by the hands of the abbot whose name it bore. He had been much addicted to the occult sciences, and people seldom spoke of him but in a whisper, and with a look of fear. When he was dying, he desired that at his burial the head of his coffin might be laid exactly under the spot to which the bright image of the rose in the window should be thrown by the moonlight at twelve o'clock on the night of the full moon next ensuing.

“The temporary successor of the deceased abbot was a man of the most rigid piety, and, instead of complying with this request, he directed that the body should be laid in the ante-chapel beside that of the last buried superior. The coffin was disposed accordingly. But the morning after the funeral, it was found on the spot which had been so singularly pointed out, and the grave designed for it had been filled up. It was again committed to the earth, and again it was found upon the floor of the chapel in the same place as after the first attempt. The baffled father was resolved to persevere; but at the third burial, at the moment when the coffin was lowered into the dust, he took the precaution of touching it with the consecrated wafer. Every one observed the

ceremony, trembling and in silence, and the assemblage heard a groan, which sounded as if it had been called forth from the corpse by the immediate agency of the blessed host. The coffin was hastily drawn up again, and the lid forced open, when it was found to contain nothing but a handful of ashes, and a small gold plate, marked with the device of a rose and star. The lay-brother also informed Nicholas that various manuscripts of Abbot Ingulph were said still to exist in the library.

“This account wrought, says the legend, in the brain of Nicholas, like the potent ingredients of an adept’s crucible.

“He spent day after day in the library, and found at last an ancient chest, the corners of which were secured by brazen clasps, exhibiting respectively the figures

of the toad, the crow, the dragon, and the panther. It was not locked, but sealed, and the wax bore the impression of a man standing on a snake. The young man did not hesitate to break it open, and examined the writings which it contained. They were all works of Abbot Ingulph, except one small thin volume, in which the characters seemed to have been originally so strange, and were now so defaced by time, that Nicholas could not decypher a single syllable. Acting, however, on a hint given in a commentary of the abbot's, he secured this mysterious book, and watched it daily with a longing and almost sickening anxiety, till the night of the full moon. He then stole the keys of the church, and at midnight held the open volume in the crimson radiance which streamed through the rose. The writing instantly



became legible ; and Nicholas learned the secret for which he had hungered.

“For the rest of that night he had in his cell, as the companion of his studies, a youth, dark-eyed, pale, slow of speech, but master of all the sciences of the world, and of all the languages ever spoken by the bricklayers of Babel, as well as of that rarer tongue, the origin of them all, which is now understood only by the chiefs of the Freemasons.

“The next morning Nicholas presented his new friend to the fathers, and proposed that he too should become an acolyte. Balthazar, for so he chose to be called, was examined by Father Timothy as to his proficiency in learning, and in the course of his answers, quoted as one of Christ’s replies to the Devil during his temptation, a verse not recorded by St.

Luke. The monk referred to the passage, and Balthazar quietly remarked that the Evangelist's account of that occurrence is very inaccurate. This heretical reply decided the holy father to refuse the candidate admittance.

“ He immediately quitted the monastery. That evening at vespers Nicholas did not present himself; he could not be found in his cell, nor in the neighbourhood of the abbey. About a year after his disappearance two young Englishmen attracted great attention as disputants in the schools at Paris; and journeyed thence to the monastery of St. Rufus in Provence, where they were soon admitted to full orders. For some years they travelled from country to country, and became celebrated for their learning and talents. They were both of them powerful in discourse on all

subjects, but it was observed that Nicholas disliked to debate questions in demonology, which his companion particularly delighted and excelled in, and of which he spoke in a tone of the utmost familiarity.

“ Their last place of residence was Rome, and here Nicholas speedily rose to high dignities, while his friend refused to accept any other office than that of his secretary. In this humble situation Balthazar was still sufficiently conspicuous; a thousand dark intrigues for the most extravagant objects were seen to succeed, nobody could tell how, but it was said they had been directed by Balthazar. Innumerable scandals among the enemies of the Cardinal of Alba, for such was now the rank of Nicholas, were detected, while he himself maintained a splendid reputation; and still men whispered and pointed

at Balthazar, whenever, that is, they were secure of not being observed by him.

“ At length the supreme See was vacant. And now discoveries multiplied every hour, so as to implicate the characters of all the leading cardinals. The mistress of one of them became devout, and confessed her own and her lover’s immorality ; and she was said to be a penitent of Balthazar’s. A heretic was burned ;—when at the stake he cried aloud that one of the Monsignori had first seduced him from the true faith ; and it was reported that Balthazar, on the eve of the execution, had gained admittance to the cell of the criminal. A third dignitary of great influence in the college suddenly deserted his former faction, and deprived them of several votes. He was known to have received fifty thousand crowns ; and Balthazar was rumoured to

have been seen carrying weighty bags under his gown in the direction of the prelate's palace. And lastly, amid the utmost excitement of the election, the French ambassador died, and left the interests of his party in irretrievable confusion. His physician had purchased drugs at a shop, the owner of which was said to have been in the service of Balthazar.

“The Cardinal of Alba became pope under the name of Adrian IV. His secretary was his chief counsellor. The defeat and death of Arnold of Brescia were brought about by his wisdom; and it was he who drew up the bull which authorised Henry II. to conquer Ireland. But those who were nearest to the pontiff perceived that he feared Balthazar as much as trusted him. A window, exhibiting among other emblems the hieroglyphic rose, had been

put up in one of the apartments of the pope. In this room he received Frederic King of the Romans, who, though he entered Italy at the head of a large army, had consented, on first meeting the sovereign priest, to hold his stirrup while he mounted on horseback. Important negotiations were carried on in the presence of the pope and the monarch, and on one occasion Adrian seemed inclined to concede a point of considerable weight, which Balthazar had before maintained with the most resolute firmness against the counsellors of the king. Frederic thought he observed the secretary point slightly to the painting in the window. At all events, the pontiff groaned, turned pale, and trembled; and after a few moments declared his determination to yield nothing.

“When Adrian was dying, Balthazar

desired that he might speak to his master in private. The patient hesitated, and faltered some words which could not be understood. But the secretary entered the chamber, and the universal bishop shuddered under his look, and feebly motioned to the attendants to retire. In half an hour Balthazar reentered the antechamber, and a slight smile might be observed to hover on his lip. He turned, however, gravely to the domestics, physicians, and cardinals, and pointed to the door through which he had just come. They found the pope dead, with an expression of extreme agony on his lifeless features. A cabinet of steel, inlaid with gold, which stood near the bed, and had before been shut, was now open, and a small parchment volume lay under the hand of the deceased pontiff.

“The book was seized by the eldest cardinal present, who attempted to discover its contents. But they were completely illegible, save that near the foot of the last page, was found inscribed in bold and youthful characters the name of ‘NICHOLAS,’ and lower down, and as if traced by trembling fingers, the regal signature of ‘ADRIAN.’ The aged prelate secretly committed the volume to the fire, and was horror-stricken by the groans and sobs which accompanied its destruction, and by the likeness of a demoniac face, which seemed to scowl at him through the cloud of sulphury smoke. Balthazar appeared no more; and it was whispered in Rome that the body of the pope was flung into the Tiber, while, to avoid any open scandal, a coffin filled with rubbish was decorated with the blazonry of



ecclesiastical empire, and buried beside Eugenius III. in the church of St. Peter."

"I fear that even fantastic and idle tales like this," said Agatha, who had joined them five minutes before, "though they cannot be seriously reported by any educated persons, yet have their effect in turning popular opinion against the Catholic church. The most absurd notions of the vulgar, as to the superstitions of monks, and the vices of prelates, are repeated in these wild legends by romance writers, who probably do not wish their fictions to be believed, whose professed business is exaggeration, but who unconsciously spread abroad many an error, so gross that they would be ashamed of having any trust in it imputed to them."

"Well," replied Isabel, "Arthur's story, though abundantly extravagant, does not

seem to me at all likely to do any harm. I am sure, my dear Mademoiselle de Clainville, it never occurred to me that it conveyed an imputation against the Roman-catholic church. I do not like horses the less for being amused by the history, in the Arabian Nights, of the Black Steed that struck out the Calender's eye with a blow of its tail. The history of Pope Adrian, which we have just heard, is, I think, nothing more than a way of telling us, by marvellous incidents, how wrong it is to seek for any knowledge inconsistent with the observance of moral principles."

"The principle of not losing our luncheon," said Arthur, "is the one which we had best observe just at present."

They walked through the ruins towards the river; and by the way, Coningsby assured the Roman-catholic lady, that he

had not at all intended to calumniate her church. Agatha received his excuse with quiet politeness, and did not reply to Isabel's previous remark. She thought, however, that as morality can only live by religion, and religion by the church, any attempt to support morality by a fiction involving imputations against the one true faith and establishment, was in fact an erring eagerness for a desirable end, through which the only real means of attaining it were sacrificed.

While she thus meditated, they sought their way to the stream, through a labyrinthine path in the wood around the abbey. A very few minutes brought them to the narrow space of smooth turf which bordered the water, and there they found the rest of the party assembled, and the collation spread, which was to regale

them. While they sat around the spot chosen for their repast, on one side of them rose the irregular mass of foliage, over which was seen a fragment of the abbey, one rugged wall of a square tower, pierced close to its summit by a window, in which the bright blue of the sky seemed set. On the other hand was the river, flowing quick and smooth under the shade of tall trees, which covered the opposite bank, and glancing at every moment with a thousand sparkles, which disappeared as fleetly, and gave place to another glittering generation of mimic stars. The arrowy fishes darted to and fro, and as they shot through sunny patches of the water, cast rapid shadows along the beds of sand, or weedy tufts beneath. A swan, with wings half raised, and neck withdrawn between them, was

enthroned upon the current, which seemed to sustain its beauty with joyous triumph.

The feasters paid due attention to the eatables set before them, yet not after so exclusive a fashion as to make them neglect the delights of the prospect. Their conversation contained nothing very memorable. They jested, sang, laughed, and made merry, and would willingly have stayed the sun in its career, and so prolonged the day.

## CHAPTER II.

SHORTLY after the repast was ended, it was proposed to embark in a pleasure-boat of Mr. Barrington's, which lay somewhat farther down the river, and to sail a few miles towards the sea. All present assented except Isabel, who disliked the motion of a boat, and said that she preferred to await their return, and employ herself in sketching part of the ruins, an occupation the implements of which had been brought with them. After some slight demur, this proposal was agreed

to, and in a few minutes she was alone in the decayed abbey.

She advanced at first but little in her task ; for, after she had made a few strokes with the pencil, she found it painful to fix her attention on the separate parts to be successively imitated in the drawing, and unconsciously preferred to gaze at the whole silent and sublime beauty of the prospect. The petty manual labour of designing arches and foliage appeared wearisome and disgusting, and, without losing the sense of the magnificent and various desolation round her, she sank into a reverie, disturbed only by the importunate image of Arthur. But soon observing that her paper was still almost a blank, she became angry at her own idleness, and blushing in her solitude, she returned with energy, if

not with cheerfulness, to the labour she had undertaken.

In the meanwhile her cousin had strayed, utterly forgetful of all around him, into the wood, and wandered in a direction contrary to that of the stream. His meditations were of millions to become suddenly happy by legislative enactments, and of a revolution to overthrow principalities and powers, and by merely bestowing authority on the peasant and the artizan, to supply them with the conscience and the wisdom needful for wielding it aright. The obstacles to this consummation were in his eyes no more important than those ripples and eddies caused by the light breeze on the surface of the river, and to no calculable degree disturbing its sure and continuous progress towards the majestic main.



His reflections on the dignity of his political designs, and on the facility of accomplishing them, were interrupted by the sudden thought that he was absenting himself from those to whom his presence was due. He turned and struck in a line as direct as he could hit upon towards the abbey. On entering its broken walls, instead of the party whom he expected to meet with, he found only Isabel.

Sitting in the shade of one of the ash-trees that grew within the precincts of the building, she had laid aside her bonnet, and her long brown hair was gently stirred about her face and neck. She bent slightly over her task, while a small fair world grew by still enchantment under her fingers. There was something eminently graceful and fascinating in the sight of the blooming girl silently intent

on her task, amid a circuit of beautiful ruin and natural verdure, moralized by solemn recollections. In that venerable prospect, man, his works, his faith, and his affections, were stealing away from age to age, while she, a spirit of youthful power, sat there tranquil and lovely, and won from the lines and colours of decay the materials of a fresh creation. But when she was regarded as herself a portion, the central point, the living and expressive eye of the landscape, it presented a view by far more delightful and harmonious than the imperfect, empty scene which she was engaged in delineating. She seemed at once the Muse of Painting, and herself the most perfect object of her art.

Arthur stood for some moments admiring the vision that presented itself to him.

He saw the virgin artist look alternately from the mouldered building to the paper, and shake away her bright and clustered hair, and pause to contemplate with religious love the noble architecture, crowned with foliage, and marked with richer beauty by the clear splendour of the time. He felt that it was a sort of profanation while he approached and spoke to her. He asked to be allowed to see her drawing; and when with some agitation, from the surprise of his sudden arrival, she showed him her performance, he observed with pleasure, amounting almost to fondness, the shrubs light as if evoked by the wand of a fairy, and the deep shadows of the broken structure that seemed to have been traced and graven by the iron style of Time. The background was but faintly indicated, and

appeared designed merely to lead the imagination into a vague and distant track.

The likeness of the drawing to the original was complete, and yet there was a difference evidently proceeding from the mind of the artist, and not from her want of skill. He looked from the building to the sketch, and the marks of sincere admiration in his countenance gave extreme pleasure to Isabel, whom he considered as the link between the reality and the representation. A mossy fragment of stone lay near her, and he seated himself on it and began to converse with her. The presence of each other kept up a secret excitement in the breasts of both, but the surface of the stream was smooth. They wandered from topic to topic, until she happened to say, "Arthur, do you

remember that we used to sit together on the grass in a summer noon long before to-day?"

"Yes," he answered, "but then we lay side by side, with our arms around each other's necks; that, and much more also, has been changed by the years that have since gone by. We scarcely know each other now, though, indeed, you have been almost as kind to me as if we had passed together every day during which we have been separated. But it is not wonderful that I should say we scarcely know each other; for, in truth, when I remember those years of childhood I seem hardly to know myself."

"I do not think," said Isabel, "that you are very different from what you were; except, except, I mean, that you are older."

"There are moments," he answered, musing, "in which I wish that I could be again what I then was."

"Are you unhappy?" she tremulously inquired.

"I scarcely know," he said; "but I had then neither doubts nor struggles comparable to those which manhood brings with it."

"Did you like," asked his cousin, "the life which you led at Doctor Wilmot's?"

"Yes, he replied, "on the whole I think I did. No one could have shewn me more kindness than my tutor, and I could not easily have found a better natured or more active playfellow than his son.

"I was eleven or twelve years old when I went to Hamnor, and you know

the lawless and merry life I had led for the last three or four previous years. You must remember it, Isabel, for you were my constant ally and playmate. You can, of course, recall to yourself the flowers we pulled, the races we ran, the strawberries which I stole, and which you were afraid to eat; the thousand games, and jests, and wanderings of our childhood, some of which, I fear, alarmed your good mother with the notion that you would become a very masculine young lady.

“I was ashamed to weep at leaving you, but I shed abundant tears in the post-chaise which conveyed me from the only home I had ever known. The wheels rolled on and on, and I thought I should have gone mad at the sound which indicated that every moment bore

me farther from you. But soon that very noise itself became a source of amusement, and from listening to it I began to attend to other things. When I reached Hamnor, I was almost consoled ; but when I found myself wrecked and thrown helpless on a strange shore, among new people, I looked back to you, and our garden, and our library of story-books, and my pony, Hero, and your spaniel, poor little Fairy, as to the things of a bright Eden, encompassed by rivers which I should never more be able to pass over. I remember to have lain awake at night, and frightened with the darkness in an unknown house, to have pressed my eyes with my fingers that I might produce those small momentary halos which are so familiar to children, as if their light would have enabled me to see again



in a vision the happy home and dear faces I had lost."

"I suppose," said Isabel, smiling, "your sorrow did not continue very long?"

"No," he answered, "though I assure you I never learned to forget you or your mother. The kindness with which I was treated at Hamnor, and the pleasantness of the life I led, soon rendered me contented. Dr. Wilmot's mode of education did not make it necessary to endure any severe or long-continued labour. He communicated knowledge in conversation, and by mingling experiments with our sports, and gratifying the curiosity excited by the objects and occurrences of our casual employments. This system encouraged in us a volatile kind of intelligence, which as eagerly busied itself about books as about

trees and hills, the smithy, and the workshop.

“We had few temptations or difficulties to encounter, for our friend was constantly seeking to provide amusement, and insinuate instruction. He left as little room as possible for any other than voluntary exertion, by explaining to us repeatedly, and minutely, whatever he wished us to understand; and he thus, in fact, took on himself that trouble of thinking which commonly is neither undergone by the teacher, nor demanded from the pupil. Whatever he required of us, was made agreeable: and he prevented us from caring for any thing that he wished us to abstain from, by engaging us in a succession of cheerful enjoyments.

“He never made the slightest distinction in his mode of educating his son and

myself. In this I suspect him to have been mistaken, for Harry and I were of very different characters. My companion had lost his mother not above a year before the beginning of my residence at Hamnor; and I have often guessed that she had given to her son a more powerful and concentrated feeling of religion, than he would have been likely to imbibe from his father. To all that is deeper, stronger, and more dogmatic in christianity Dr. Wilmot was naturally disinclined. His cheerful and pious heart never seemed to experience any difficulty in performing all his duties. He was not perhaps sufficiently aware how hard are the trials to be undergone by others. The inborn elasticity of his spirit enabled him to endure without fainting or repining; and in place of that iron force which is so needful for

most men in their struggle with the world, he came off victorious by the sweetness of his temper, the moderation of his tastes, the kindness and heartiness of all his feelings.

“This vigour in warring against evil, was, I think, supplied to Harry by the influence of the earnest and uncompromising religion which he had learned from his mother. I have endeavoured to cultivate a similar energy in myself, by later reflection, and by philosophy. But while we were boys together, I often observed the difference between the point of view from which he regarded every thing, and that at which I myself stood. To this I do not think that our tutor gave sufficient attention. His mode of rearing the mind would have been admirably adapted to a state of the world in which the corrupting tyranny of our present circumstances should no longer

exist ; but was ill fitted for giving either the fortitude necessary to sustain the burthen of actual evil, or the courage by which alone we can hope to create a new system of good.

“ Sometimes, when I have been in hesitation or distress, I have thought with a vain longing of the tranquil and easy spirit of Dr. Wilmot. But when I have sought to discipline myself to the same temper, I have uniformly found that I was wasting, in a hopeless endeavour, the strength which, if otherwise employed, might enable me to conquer success. Sometimes too I have thought of the strong unostentatious resolution of his son, the determined humility with which he avoided temptation, and the adherence to moral principle which seldom gave ground, and never was entirely defeated.

But this also is a model which I have not been able to imitate very faithfully. I have been so much confused and pained by the obstinate suggestions of my mind, on a thousand points of duty and prudence, that I have sought for the most part to suppress all these distracting thoughts, and have at last devoted myself, with an almost entire indifference for every thing else, to the improvement of the world; convinced that where I see a manifest evil, I cannot be wrong in attempting to remove it. Men have hitherto been compelled to grope darkly, and labour for themselves in solitude. The period has now arrived which commands them to work together, and makes each a champion of the rights of all.

“ In the various games and employments with which Dr. Wilmot encouraged us to

occupy ourselves, I remember that Harry and I agreed but seldom as to our ultimate views. He was eager to do his best, and to finish whatever he was engaged in ; while I was always longing to enlarge the plan, and to attempt what was impracticable. When we conversed together about the fanciful visions which gave us the most pleasure, he seemed to delight indeed in ideal images, but he loved them as mere dead ornaments with which he was personally unconnected. As for me, I was never satisfied but in making myself the chief actor among the gilded vistas of that unreal scenery.

“ But the phantasms which we cherished were always either compounded of the materials which daily lay before us, or woven of mere unsubstantial dreams. In the workshop I dimly and inadequately

fancied myself a Robinson Crusoe, with a thousand new necessities, and skill and vigour to satisfy them all. When at study I frequently turned from the appointed lesson, while I supposed myself the busy inhabitant of some boundless library, accomplished in all tongues, and using them for the mastery of all human knowledge, and of vague worlds and sciences, the existence of which I only conceived as an awful hypothesis.

“ While finding amusement in tales of wonder and fairy magnificence, Harry always remained severely and resolutely himself. In dreams of chivalry I constantly supposed that I was the victorious knight. In supernatural legends I played to my own eyes the part of the tempted, the enchanted, the triumphant object of a thousand sorceries. In all this he saw



nothing but pictures, which he looked at without losing the consciousness of his own separate existence ; but I was perpetually surrounded by fantastic mirrors, and felt as if transferred into the distorted portraits of myself which they multiplied around me."

"Had you never any other amusement," said Isabel, "than those which you could find in the parsonage at Hamnor?"

"Indeed," he replied, "I seldom left it. You know that I did not visit your home for more than a few days in the year ; and I scarcely ever went any where else. However, I remember that when I was about thirteen, Dr. Wilmot took us to see a play at a neighbouring town. Up to that time all my airy pageantry had been entirely separate from any thing I knew of the actual world. But the sight of a

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scenical representation, threw me into a state of almost painful excitement, by embodying in real forms the clouds and mysteries of my boyish fancy.

“ At first I beheld with awe those strange and resplendent figures, moving in an atmosphere of their own, and exalted, as it seemed, to more than human dignity. Their declamation, which would perhaps have startled me less had they been better actors, and had their art accomplished the bringing them back to nature, sounded in my ears like the utterance of beings superior to men. I sat for a time breathless and amazed, with my eyes ruled and spell-drawn by even the most trivial gesture of those stately phantoms.

“ But as the theatre became hushed, and I was more accustomed to the view of the stage and the performers, I began to com-

prehend, after the fashion and measure of a child, the meaning of what lay before me. I learned to distinguish, as different individuals, the personages represented, to follow the circumstances in which they were placed, and to interest myself for the result of the whole. As the play proceeded I was thrown into an agony of eagerness and sympathy. I could not sit still, my fingers were constantly working and tingling, and unconsciously I made at intervals loud inarticulate exclamations which startled every one near me. Then their looks and murmurs gave me to understand what improprieties I was committing, and recalled to me the knowledge of my own situation. But I was astounded by the indifference of their manner ; and I thought that none but wonderfully hard-hearted persons could feel so little emotion

at the exploits and sorrows exhibited before their eyes. I even was angry for some moments at this apathy, and desired to punish it. But I soon again became completely careless of the audience, and lost in the scenes of the play.

“It was a melo-drama of chivalry, full of torments and perils, of fury, and unnatural sentiment. I saw it again after some years, and laughed, or yawned, through the whole performance, though with a deep under current of wonder and melancholy when I thought of my boyhood.

“Then, however, the want of truth and imagination did not in the least weaken the effect produced on my mind. The false and noisy emphasis of style so conspicuous in both the dialogue and the acting, seemed to me the result of a sublime art for which I had not been at all

prepared by the cheerful order and plain sincerity of Dr. Wilmot's domestic life and discipline. I was utterly confounded, as if to the eyes of a hermit who has always lived in a deep and narrow valley, the mountain barrier were thrown open by an earthquake, and the prospect displayed of a wide country shaken by the concussion, and a stormy sea spreading round the horizon.

“What had seemed to me strangest of all was, that one of the actresses resembled you. The likeness was perhaps in truth very faint. It was strong enough, however, when supported by the glare and illusion of the stage, to puzzle and delight me. I knew, or might have known, that the woman before me was at least twice your age. But I forgot all the inconsistency and impossibility of supposing any

relation between yourself and her. You smile, Isabel ; remember I was only thirteen, and previously had never seen a play. So at all events it was, I persuaded myself, as often as she appeared, that there was some secret and miraculous identity of the forlorn princess in the blue robe, and the little girl who had been my play-mate. I did not indeed understand how you could have grown so tall, or have learned to speak with such magnificent elocution. But the more surprising was the whole affair, the more was I pleased ; and whenever she was off the stage I watched with the utmost eagerness for her re-appearance, as if it had been yours.

“ At length the dark green curtain fell. The stir and clamour of the idle spectators succeeded to the declamation, and

passion, and impressive catastrophe of the play. But I remained with my sight inwoven, as it were, into that gloomy drapery, and straining to catch a glimpse of the further progress of the story and fate of the characters, which were vaguely and anxiously imaged in my brain, and which I conceived as still in agitation behind the hated screen.

“That night I could scarcely sleep. I was full of tumultuous rejoicing. I had become acquainted with men stronger and more lovely than any I had ever seen before. While I lay in bed, I clenched my hands, and gesticulated with all my force, repeating to myself whatever scraps and phrases of the piece I could either recite or imitate. For the first time I had left my nest, and was flying among the gusty trees, and the clouds, and lightnings,

and winged genii, which had been hitherto unknown to me.

“ I fancied myself gifted with superior energy, always in an ecstasy of passion, and striding over the world in blazoned armour. I supposed innumerable dangers with which to encircle myself, trains of followers, legions of adversaries, bright faces of ladies, and scowling giants perpetually around; and still that actress whom I had thought like you, moved before me in her blue robe, and with a diamond crescent on her brow. At last these confused images began to weary and frighten me. I pulled my night-cap over my eyes to exclude them, and fell asleep. I confess that I do not remember whether I dreamed of the theatre or not.

“ I know that it long influenced my waking life. I constantly threw myself



into scenic attitudes, and roared at Harry Wilmot in the most absurd bombast, and with the most exaggerated emphasis. My companion only laughed at these extravagances, and when in the character of King Arthur or St. George, I fenced against him with a switch, he contented himself by disarming me. The most obvious symptoms of my theatrical folly passed away after a time. But I continued to think of the world as of a great stage, designed for the acting of loud frenzies and ecstasies.

“I was less and less satisfied with the life I led at Hamnor; I thought much oftener than before of the years that were to succeed my boyhood, and of what they might bring forth. The green hedges that had surrounded my existence with happiness and security, now seemed the

walls of a prison ; and through the chinks left by the withering of the flowers that had covered the trellis, I looked with anxious longings at the misty region afar off.

“ This kind of feeling was strengthened every day. I began to read with eagerness the most passionate and turbulent writings I could obtain. When I had exhausted the small stock of novels, and rhetorical philosophy in the library at Hamnor, I betook myself to more obscure reservoirs of lamentation, and rapture, and mystical dreaming. I examined all the traces which I could discover of the old supernatural arts, and of heathen and christian demonology ; and I remember having been occupied in this way at the time when I past a week with you, not long before I went to Oxford.”

"Yes," said Isabel, "I could not make out at first what you were thinking about so profoundly; and when you confessed, I insisted, I believe, that you should draw my horoscope."

"I recollect," he continued, "that visit the better, because I met more society at your mother's than I had been accustomed to, and I was very much annoyed at my own awkwardness and timidity in company. Of this my residence at Oxford has, I hope, in a great degree cured me."

"You, I imagine, can scarcely conceive the feeling of a young man on going to one of the English Universities. He is passing through the Temple of Minerva to the Forum; through a library to the drawing room and council chamber. The muses fill the office of the ladies in the times of chivalry, who buckled on the

youthful champion the arms and spurs of manhood. The emancipated schoolboy seems, in his own eyes, to be entering through the shaded cloister into the broad sunshine of the world. Whatever buffets he may receive from the hand of collegiate discipline, he is prepared to consider as scarcely more painful or degrading than the touch of the wand by which the baron set free his serf. I know at least that I felt in this way, though the lenient rule of Dr. Wilmot had given me less cause to rejoice in my liberation than might have been alleged by the greater number of Oxonians.

“ I had thought more of the busy members of the crowd among whom I was about to be thrown than of their character as students and teachers ; more of the loud theatre of general human society to which

I had at last drawn near, than of its ancient and tranquil vestibule wherein my rest was for some time to be appointed. But my mind received a totally different direction when I came in sight of Oxford.

“ The sunny autumnal stillness which surrounded those wooded haunts, and tall watch-towers of knowledge, filled me with the conviction that the place and spirit had a value of their own no less genuine, and perhaps more deep, than that which belonged to them, as connected with my entry into social life. There was an air of self-subsistence, and unquestionable right, in the calm and lordly antiquity of the University ; and for a time I was impressed with a love of monastic quiet, and of an existence which should be employed but little in outward action, and rather be occupied in calling

around itself the rich memorials of other ages, and the silent symbols of all human meditation.

“If you have ever seen Oxford, you cannot be surprised that the first view of it should have influenced me thus. Nothing can be more majestic, I had almost said awful, than the aspect of those gray buildings which have thrown their shadow over the last innocent hours of so many lives. The dreary barrenness of asceticism which might seem to be imaged in the weatherbeaten stones, is softened and beautified by the living and joyous freshness of the groves that surround those echoing cloisters. The greatness of many of the men who had here been educated, presented itself to me as animating and crowning the city of colleges, before I had become acquainted with the characters of

the actual inhabitants. I dreamed of Hooker, sitting with his book on some shaded knoll in the outskirts of the gardens; and Taylor in some dim library sending abroad the glances of his dark and glowing eyes to plunder from all the world, and entombed antiquity, their innermost hoards of wisdom and loveliness. I thought of Sidney and Raleigh, the choice gentlemen of England, here conversing in the gaiety of a boyhood, afterwards so fruitful for both of stately honour. Even then I remembered Vane, perhaps the most profound and vigorous spirit of the most memorable generation, and Locke and Somers, the skilful and temperate, but how far too timorous reformers of our government. I own that I could not preserve myself from feeling a most reverential admiration for these masters of their

own days, in consequence of the time, with all its change and death, which separated me from them ; little remembering, or perhaps knowing, how superior each succeeding age must necessarily be to all its predecessors.

“ During the commencement of my residence at the University, I wandered with intent and delighted zeal through all the spots which are ennobled by any precious tradition. I remember to have stood one lovely night on the stone which marks the place of execution where perished Latimer and Ridley. It was then, I think, that first came over me like an inspiration, the horror which I have since endeavoured to cultivate and systematize at all the oppressions that the sun beholds. It was not until long afterwards that I could stand before the cap which covered



the head of Laud on the last day of his earthly life, and exult to think that so bloody, and remorseless a persecutor, had at length been made a conspicuous example for all those who sit in the high places of tyranny, and abet with cunning whispers the guilt of kings.

“The genius of the place retained for a considerable time its predominance over my mind. One constant irresistible feeling of reverence was produced by many cooperating particulars,—the splendour of ecclesiastical ceremony,—the illustrious files of names,—the almost boundless libraries. Even in the long ranks of portraits, where so many memorable minds gazed from the canvass, the noble bearing, the weighty brows, and piercing, and pregnant looks, appeared to attest the successful influences of the institution and

scheme by which they had been fostered. Instead of being surrounded by the easy and cheerful order of the Rectory at Hamnor, I now seemed to myself to be lost and overpowered in the solemn spiritual being of my mother University.

“ I know not indeed how long this vague fancy of an awe-stricken boy might have continued, had I not been gradually drawn into intercourse with my young contemporaries.

“ When I went to Oxford, I found myself very unfit to associate with my fellow-students. The greater number of them had been educated at large schools, and experienced no difficulty, or annoyance, in associating with each other. They had learned from the same books, had always amused themselves with the same sports, had formed similar habits ; and at every

moment unconsciously made use of tokens and watchwords, like those of freemasonry, with which I was totally unacquainted. They knew indeed but little of learning in which I had not been instructed; and I soon discovered that I had information on many subjects, of which they were totally ignorant. But in familiarity with the world, and readiness to take part in it, I found that when compared to them, I was most lamentably deficient.

“ I might, perhaps, have sunk to be a mere unit in the total sum of under-graduate collegians, but that I became peculiarly intimate with a few individuals of larger views and stronger intellects than the mass. Among them I first obtained what has become the keystone of my mind, and learned to look at every thing

from the one vantage-place of a belief in the Rights of Man as the foundation of society and government. We did not amount to more than four or five ; and the overbearing prejudices of those among whom we lived, and to whom we were subjected, compelled us to pursue in secrecy those studies, the results of which we were determined that we would one day spread abroad.

“ I am not sure that we did not derive more satisfaction from thus labouring in recesses, and beneath a cloud, for an object, of the value of which we were convinced, and in which we knew that we must ultimately be successful, than we should have enjoyed if we had been permitted to proclaim our views. We were exposed to persecution for our opinions, and therefore, even if we had wanted

interior conviction, we could not have doubted of their importance. Darkness was over the earth, and yet in a spot which had madly been deserted by almost all mankind, we, a few wandering friends, had discovered a natural fountain of luminous fire.

“ These political opinions furnished me with matter both for study and for social excitement during the latter half of my residence at Oxford. I had the assurance of being worthily occupied, so as at once to enlarge my own mind and to assist in the improvement of the world. Yet I cannot say that I was on the whole happy. I felt a rude discordance between the thoughts which I most desired to cultivate, and the spirit of the place with which I was necessarily connected, and which had indeed a certain

tranquil and venerable charm. There was also something in my public views that appeared to separate me from my former self, and the dreamy uselessness and selfish activity of my boyhood impertuned me with their delusive remembrances.

“These spectral fragments of the past were at war with the sunny realities of my manhood. I will even confess that my strength sometimes gave way, and that I vibrated for a time between regret for days and feelings which could not be recalled, and fidelity to present duties of a loftier cast and a more sober colouring. I used then to lament the impossibility of reconciling and blending the merely personal remembrances of youth with the comprehensive designs and expanding will of maturity. But since my escape

beyond the tutelage of the University, I have for the most part turned away my eyes from the dreams of infancy, and the sportive idleness of later nonage, and have devoted myself to better and graver hopes. Your presence, Isabel, has brought back to me a thousand fancies and recollections which I had done better in persisting to lose sight of."

She could make no answer to this. But it seemed to her that speculations and pursuits which broke the continuity of the mind, and made it regard its earlier years as portions of another being than itself, could scarcely be so natural or salutary as Arthur represented them; and if she allowed a tinge of her own disappointment to mingle with these thoughts, is there any one who will harshly blame her? Both felt that there

was an interruption to the old happiness and cordiality of their intercourse, and they attempted, with little success, to speak of casual and unimportant topics, while they waited in the abbey for the return of their companions.



### CHAPTER III.

DEERHILL would have had for Arthur Coningsby some of the interest of an enchanted region, if for nothing else, yet for this, that it contained the picture-gallery with which he had been first and most intimately familiar.

In that home of silent life and ideal grandeur, he and Isabel had played together at many intervals during their childhood. He therefore proposed to himself, as one of his most agreeable employments, to look at the pictures again,

in company with his cousin. She blushed and trembled with pleasure, derived both from her recollection of the past and consciousness of the present, while she leaned on Arthur's arm and walked with him to the gallery.

It contained a great number of family portraits, and several valuable paintings of miscellaneous kinds, and by different masters. The cousins walked slowly from end to end of the long room, and lingered for some instants at any object which they particularly remembered. Arthur looked rapidly from picture to picture, and at the face of his companion, and his countenance brightened with a thousand pleasant meanings. But her eyes gradually filled with tears, and were bent towards the floor, or turned in sidelong and momentary glances upon him. In a few

minutes he stopped before a portrait of the time of Charles I., and gazed at it long and earnestly.

It represented a middle-aged man with intelligent features, piercing eyes, an expression of some severity, and the dark cuirass, uncovered head, falling collar, and displayed hands which Vandyke loved to immortalize.

“Yes,” said he, “there stands Sir Edward. How entirely he is a soldier and a gentleman! Vandyke must have felt that his personages, such at least as he made them, do not belong to the common air of the world. He has created for them an atmosphere of their own; and they seem always overshadowed by the rich umber of some palace roof. Let me consider. There was, I am sure, a story of his death. Yes, that fair-haired boy,

on whose head his hand is leaning, followed him, if I recollect aright, against his commands in a sortie from a castle held by him for Charles. The garrison were beaten off, and Sir Edward was the last to retreat. He heard the shriek of the page, and rode back alone against the enemy under a shower of balls, seized the wounded boy, placed him upon the crupper of his horse, and so regained the castle. The knight was dead when the horse arrived at the gate, and was only supported in the saddle by the arms of his young attendant. Is not that the tale we used to hear ? ”

“ Yes,” she replied, “ and the widow, instead of disliking the person who had been the cause of her husband’s death, treated him with peculiar affection, and gave him her only child in marriage. He

took the name of Barrington, and was my ancestor."

"I respect him on that account," her companion gaily answered, "as much as I admire Sir Edward for his courage and generosity. But tell me, who is that young man with the lordly Elizabethan look, and wearing the large ruff, embroidered doublet, and gorgeous trunk-hose? I do not recollect him at all."

"He," replied the lady, "was a friend of Sir Philip Sidney. Does he not look as if he had faith that he could call down the stars to worship his mistress, or that his sonnets and his lance might win for her a place in the galaxy? His love, I am sure, was no morose, diseased, self-tormenting passion; but a splendid and liberal devotion, of which he would have taken all the world and all history to

witness, and with which a thousand generous purposes allied themselves. The poetry of the brow and eye, and the courtesy of the mouth are quite exquisite. Do you not think so ?”

“Indeed,” said he, “I do. I should like to know more of him than is shown in the picture. He has not the look of the sullen and tyrannous aristocracy to which I suppose he belonged.”

Isabel answered meekly, “He was a younger son of the family, and died unmarried. He was a Roman Catholic, and was on the eve of wedding a lady of the same persuasion, when his religion was laughed at by some of Elizabeth’s courtiers. They said that the only persons who took any trouble about its observances were the priests, whose conduct was governed by selfishness, and the poor, who

were pious from ignorance. He fought successively with two of the young Protestants, and severely wounded them both.

“He then made a vow that he would visit on foot, I do not know how many, of the most celebrated Roman Catholic shrines on the continent, and would submit to all the hardships endured by the poorest pilgrim. I have in manuscript a poem which he addressed to his affianced bride when he was about to leave England, and it is one of the most beautiful expressions of love, chivalry, and moral and religious enthusiasm, that I have ever read. He kept his vow to the letter. The reputation of his rank and talents, and of the singular circumstances in which he was placed, accompanied him throughout Europe ; and he might have been received with the utmost distinction in all the cities

he visited ; but he would mingle in no amusements, partake of no gratifications beyond those of the humblest devotees, wear nothing richer than the coarse cloak and the scalloped hat, and use no means of subsistence but the alms of the charitable. In this way he spent more than a year. It even began to be suspected that he had resolved to lead the life of an ascetic, and to retire, after the performance of his vow, into some monastery of the most rigid rule.

“ Florence was the last spot of his pilgrimage, and here, as he walked along the streets, the young Italians pointed to him while he past them, and jested at the folly of a youthful cavalier who would thus abandon glory, society, and love. The next day he appeared in the lists, and, for the fame of his mistress, won the



prize at the lance's point from the bravest of those scoffers. Thence he travelled with the utmost speed to England, and found the lady, whose hand he had come to claim, lying on her death-bed. A few years after he was killed in fighting against the Armada."

"A piteous tale, Isabel," exclaimed Arthur, "and one that sounds well from a lady's lips! Here, I see, is a landscape of Ruysdael; how different from his ordinary subjects, and yet how completely in his best style! Unnumbered times that prospect has haunted me. Could you have conceived, without seeing it, that there is so much beauty in a flat extent of meadow, with a pool at one corner, and a humble church in the distance? How often does every one look at a similar landscape, and turn away from it with

indifference ! A man of genius sees in it at a glance all that it really involves of beauty ; and when he has created it anew upon his canvass, it remains for ever a portion of the more splendid region, towards which our thoughts habitually journey. Who can forget that glow of emerald in the centre, where the sunshine escapes out of the clouds ! that glimmer on the water, and the clear tranquil shades over the rest of the prospect, through which the gray steeple lifts itself ! That unpretending expanse of verdure belongs, does it not, Isabel ? to the Eden, the Meru, the Isles of Asphodel, and the Fairy land, which hover like evening clouds above our actual earth, and to which we constantly recur as to our ideal home. To say so much of Claude is comparatively nothing ; for by his

enchanted seas, and sculptured palaces, and spiritual atmosphere, and fields visited of the gods, he evidently designed to produce this impression. But here is a fog-encircled Dutchman, snatching, he knew not wherefore, at every shred of natural beauty within his reach ; and who, when he has gazed upon a patch of green grass, and a sky of broken cloud, exalts it into a province of the mind's imperishable kingdom."

"Who is that lady in the dress of a century back? Neither the subject nor the painting is fine."

"I do not wonder," Isabel answered, "at your forgetting all about her. She certainly does not appear to have been beautiful, and there is no remarkable event that I know of connected with her history ; yet there is something very

sweet and intelligent in her countenance ; she looks to me quite a fire-side goddess, and, I believe, she was an admirable wife and mother. She brought Protestantism into the family, and had the satisfaction of seeing her eldest son resign a valuable place which he held under James II., rather than change his religion."

"Aye, there he stands in wig and velvet," said the republican ; "he looks very much as if he had obtained warning of William's attempt, and knew he should gain most by backing the new settlement. He got his place again, did he not ?"

"I do not know," she answered, "but here is a portrait, so beautiful that you cannot have forgotten it. It is the wife of Sir Edward, whom we have looked at already, before her marriage."

"Beautiful indeed!" he exclaimed ; "that

face has often returned to my mind, but I never could remember where I had seen it, and I have thought for years that I had met it in society, or that it had flitted past me in a dream. I never saw any thing more ethereal than the whole countenance and figure. What a golden foliage of clustered hair! and how delicately she holds those flowers, as if they were a sudden bloom opening from her fingers, or growing with her breath from the tremulous lips, and caught while they floated on the air! But there is human living light in those grey eyes, and through them all the spirit of the lady speaks to us."

"Here," said his companion, after a pause, "is a picture of scarcely inferior interest. This gentleman was kept in prison during ten years of the reign of James I. on some vague and absurd

accusation. His head looks as if it had sunk in weariness of life upon his hand, and his fine features are replete with thoughtful sorrow. He spent the years of his captivity in the study of mathematics and natural philosophy, but never would commit to paper any of the results of his labours. Do you not think he looks as if he were cut off by desperation from mankind? He died within a few months after his release, and, I believe, I have heard it said, or have seen in some of the family papers, that he had lost all relish for the world from which he had been shut out, and that on the day of his liberation, he went from the Tower to an inn, and remained for many hours in a solitary room till he had finished the perusal of a scientific treatise which he had received from the continent."

"A great mind ruined by a deed of atrocious tyranny!" said Arthur.

"But is it necessary," asked Isabel, "to let others deprive us of our tastes and affections? I do not think that any length of imprisonment could make me unlearn my love for nature and for my friends."

"The tyranny is not the less detestable," he replied, "because similar evils might have existed without its intervention."

They then looked at a spirited study by Rubens, of St. George and the Dragon; and Isabel turned to her cousin and said, "How well I remember your admiration of the champion in this picture! In your eagerness to realize your notion of the warrior you drove a long stick close to my face, and I believe I was foolish enough to burst into tears."

"I remember it well," he answered, "and you wept the more because you thought I should be annoyed at your weeping at all. You were always far too ready to forgive my rudeness and carelessness. I was a rough and ill-tempered playfellow for one so gentle as you. I fear you must often think of what I was with extreme severity."

"No indeed, Arthur," she said, and blushed at her own eagerness. "I think of nothing with so much pleasure as of our childish friendship." When she had uttered these words she fancied that she felt her cousin gently pressing to his side the arm with which she leaned on him. But it was probably no more than a fancy, for at the next moment he fixed his eyes on a picture by Nicolo Poussin, of Apollo among the Shepherds.



“The God,” he observed, “breaks out here nobly through the peasant’s dress. I will tell you the story on which Poussin wrought, in a shape in which you are not likely to have met with it before.

“The eyelids of Jupiter were closed, not in sleep, but inward contemplation. Suddenly his eagle fanned him with its broad wings, and screamed. He opened his eyes, and looked through the crystal floor of heaven at the worlds which were spread below as on a map. He saw mountains shaking down avalanches, and stormy seas, and plains covered with carnage, and palaces filled with crime. He beheld vast deserts tyrannized over by the lion and the serpent, cities where men were wronging and corrupting one another, and all the complication of good and evil. He saw that all was moving in obedience to

general laws, and he was undisturbed. But he perceived the corpse of his servant, the Cyclops on a mountain, and half shaded by the forest, half illuminated by the glare of the volcano. The breast and forehead of the giant were transfixed by the arrows of ethereal fire. The deed had been done by the hand of Apollo in revenge for the death of his son, whom Jupiter had slain with Cyclopean thunderbolts.

“That evening, while the herdsmen and retainers of Admetus were in arms to protect the flocks and cattle of the chieftain against wild beasts and robbers, and were lighting their watch-fires on the Molossian hills, a youth suddenly appeared among them, clad in a rustic dress, with a boarspear in his hand, and a small stringed instrument slung over his shoulder beside his bow and quiver.

“He said that he had lost his way, and would be glad to remain with them, provided they would furnish him with subsistence in return for his services in hunting and tending cattle. They readily assented to his proposal ; and he sat down beside a fire, with the glare of which the last rays of sunset were now mingling.

“The stranger was Apollo, exiled from the skies by Jupiter, and compelled to take refuge on earth. Fresh from divine converse, the God of poetry yet knew how to temper himself to the humblest as well as the most exalted natures. Although his eyes were sometimes turned in momentary glances towards that occidental empire which was now saddening for its departed lord, his jest and roundelay, his narrative of achievements in love and war, and his tales of ghosts and enchanters

were delightful to the ears of the peasants round him, and were received with loud applauses, which rang through all the hills, and startled the wolf low crouching in the distant brake. He touched his instrument and sang of the fair nymphs, of the youthful foresters whom they have chosen to live with them in the woods, and of the dogs baying round the thickets which concealed their master, or lying down to die on the verge of the fountain in which he had vanished. His voice then mounted swiftly and clearly towards the stars, and spread like a silver vapour across the valley; and the pause of silent gladness among his auditors was only interrupted by a faint echo of the last notes from the opposite crags and the bare mountain wall.

“ The God lived on among the shep-

herds. In every hunting match he was a bold assistant ; in every festival a mirthful companion ; on the lonely hillside a friend, and a sage prophet of the weather. To him was given the honour of laying at the feet of Admetus the head of the wild boar and the wolf, and the choicest portions of the slain stag ; and the maidens, as they danced over the knolls or lingered at the fountain, had their quickest and softest looks for him.

“ The God comprehended all the thoughts of the mountaineers, excelled in all their arts, sympathized with all their sorrows, and delighted in all their enjoyments. He was filled with the spirit of poetry, which, in whatever region it may be thrown, and in whatsoever forms of being immersed, is itself knowledge and power.

“ Now, Isabel, my story, if you choose to hear any more of it, leaves Apollo and the Molossians, and returns into the skies. We have nothing more to do with that fine ruddy group so imbued with the divine light of antique beauty ; and which looks as if it could not any where have been conceived but in Ionia, or Grecian Sicily.

“ Meanwhile, the absence of the deity from the celestial palaces was lamented by their inmates ; and Jupiter saw that a gloom had gathered on the faces of the Immortals. “ He was indignant that the presence of the criminal whom he had banished should be thus important to his race, and he commanded Hermes to bring from earth some human visitant who might supply the place of the exile.

“ The herald thought, that among the

chosen companions of Apollo, he would be most likely to find a substitute for him ; and the rough sandals of a Molossian shepherd were soon treading on that crystal floor, into which jewels of all hues seemed to have been melted ; and his rude limbs, and weatherbeaten features, appeared among those translucent forms. At first, the peasant remained silent and trembling ; but when he had drunk of the mighty wine, he began to talk of flocks and fields, and to express contempt for Admetus, whom he compared in his thoughts with the radiant beings around him. He awoke stupified and staring among his brethren on his native hills, and uttered broken ravings against his master, which were repaid by blows and curses.

“Hermes next introduced a lawyer, who had just reached his home triumphant, after

gaining an important cause. His conversation was full of contemptuous jests and eager contradictions. He wrested the laws of the universe to prove that evil is good, and good evil. Hermes therefore conducted him again to earth, and gave him, as a fee, an ample purse of gold. But when the lawyer attempted to use the coin, he was apprehended for passing money not recognised by the state, and put upon his trial. He made a long and brilliant speech, in which he described all that had occurred to him, not omitting to report his own conversation; and he so well convinced the judges, that the priests of Jupiter were authorized to appropriate the money which had come from heaven.

“The next candidate for the throne of Apollo was a soldier. He entered com-



pletely armed, as he had been found on his post. He looked with admiration at the helmet of Pallas and the shield of Mars, and was dazzled by the resplendent beauty of the goddesses. But that presence, and that banquet admitted not of repose, and for exertion there was no object. He sat confused, and silent, until the goblet did its office, and he sank into heavy slumber. When he recovered his consciousness he felt the night wind on his brow, and was keeping ineffectual ward before the camp.

“An orator from the public assembly was then presented; and he, when he had tasted of the wine-cup, arose, laid his hand upon his breast, and discoursing in smooth rhetoric of himself and the deities, showed by much argument, and many illustrations, that his most becoming demeanor towards

them would be one of modest humility. But before he had reached the peroration, he found himself addressing the assembled people, who were delighted at hearing those epithets applied to them which the speaker had designed for the Gods.

“ The orator was followed by a philosopher, who earnestly looked and listened, and seemed to meditate in what region of his system he should place his new associates. He gazed at all in turn, and asked some questions, from which it was evident that he considered each a mere abstraction, or pure expression of a principle. When he had mastered, as he believed, the difficulties connected with these transcendant natures, he considered for some time, and then proceeded to explain the laws of refraction and reflection, by which the wondrous light that

surrounded him might be accounted for. He enumerated what he supposed were the chemical ingredients of the nectar; assigned its musical character and name to the voice of each of the deities; and analysed the relation they bore to mortals, and that in which mortals stood to them. He was transferred to a blank nook of the universe where he might study all orders of existence, himself unconnected with any.

“Hermes in despair then set upon the throne a lovely child, whom he had conveyed from a valley where she was gathering flowers. The first drop of the immortal liquor which passed her lips destroyed her life; and the messenger was commanded no longer to punish men by bringing them among the deities.

“But suddenly the eagle spread its wings

and flew to earth, and perched upon a rock which overhung the sea. To the distant mariner the light that surrounded its beak and talons appeared a watch-fire or a meteor. The rock was beside the mouth of a deep cave, in which mused a poet; to the sound of winds and sea modulating his vast melodies, and revolving his orbéd thoughts.

“The poet looked upon the bird, and knew that it belonged to a kingdom whereof he was himself a rightful inhabitant. He laid his garland upon its head; his limbs quivered with a sudden lightness; and side by side they rose unto the farthest skies. He placed himself upon the vacant throne as upon his natural seat; and the gods recognised in him the mortal who was worthy of celestial converse. He gazed with delighted but

undazzled eyes on the forms of beauty and of power : for the art, which in him was impulse and intuition, made him comprehend and feel wherein was the glory and what the sanctity of those superhuman beings to whom he knew himself the destined equal.

“ Can you forgive me my long story, and not run away before we have looked at this Corregio ? ”

“ If on any other account I had wished to go,” said Isabel, “ I could not resist my love for that exquisite picture. I have looked at it for hours, and never have been well able to understand why it has any charm ; yet I feel that it has a greater than any painting I ever saw. The face is not beautiful, certainly at least not handsome ; and nothing can be more awkward than the figure. But how

it seems to live and smile! One could fancy that he had painted with his mind instead of lines and colours; and that the most amiable mind in the world. Does not the child seem growing to her breast? And she looks as if her whole existence depended on feeling it close to her. How he must have loved his children!"

"Yes," he replied; "and their mother, who, I think, they say was his constant and only model."

"O!" she exclaimed, "what a happy life they must have led. They must have grown more attached to each other every day."

"Aye," he answered, "till the whole was put an end to by his death."

"No, no," rejoined Isabel, "they must have still loved each other, though they were divided. Nothing, I suppose, but

her affection for her children could have enabled her to survive him."

Again there was that simultaneous feeling of delight, at which a moment's reflection caused them both to shrink and tremble. At this instant their eyes happened to fall on a highly-finished picture by Jan Steen, which hung near them, and which represented, with the most minute and amusing fidelity, a Dutch room, and its air of obsolete neatness, its latticed window, and carved cabinet. In the centre stood a card-table, at which two burgomasters and their wives were playing. Behind was a sideboard, on which a servant, who was just going out at the open door, had placed refreshments. A boy was secretly helping himself to them; and in another corner a cat had carried off the fan of one of the old ladies,

and having thrust its paw through the embroidered silk, was now attempting to disengage itself. All this was exhibited on the canvass with the most literal and laborious accuracy, while the truth and richness of every line and expression in the faces, and of all the accessories, and the magical effect of the light through the doorway, made it a splendid and very valuable specimen of that style of art, or, if you will, of mechanism.

All this, which it costs a few minutes to describe, and a few seconds to read of, was comprehended at a glance by Arthur and Isabel; and it interrupted a state of feeling which had much of confusion, and something of pain, with so keen a sense of the ludicrous, that they broke together into merry and continued laughter.

Their ringing voices seemed mutual



echoes; and, with sparkling eyes and flushed complexions, each looked into the other's face for a reflection of their common joy. But their unsteady glances were met by the sight of the gazing and motionless figures on the walls, in whose looks appeared to live the calm reproaches of ancestral generations. The phantom forms, the noiseless extent of the apartment, and a feeling within which gave its force to the outward circumstances, chilled them to the heart, and their laughter ended in a sigh. They turned to a painting, by Titian, of Narcissus looking at himself in the fountain, and eagerly sought in it an object which might partly relieve them from the consciousness of themselves and of each other.

“ I never could conceive,” said Isabel,  
“ the possibility of any one falling in love

with his own face. How much more easy is it to become attached to a dog, or a bird—to any thing that will give us love in return for ours; or even to make friends with a flower which we can fancy to love us. I have read a story of this purport: There was a Tartar Khan, one of whose favourite retainers, a young man of great beauty, fled in disguise from his service rather than marry an ill-featured woman; and left behind him the distich,

‘ Beauty ought no more to unite with ugliness  
Than the bird of Paradise with the night-owl.’

He was pursued and overtaken; and the Khan determined to inflict upon him the severest punishment. For this purpose, by the advice of a dervish, he caused a chamber to be constructed, of which the walls, roof, and floor, were mirrors of thick crystal; and the only light admitted

came through openings concealed from the view of any one within. At night an artificial radiance, the source of which was concealed, illuminated the dungeon.

“ Here the prisoner was confined. Wherever he turned his eyes he could see nothing but his own image ; around, above, below, every thing was still the same agonizing self. He sometimes thought he would dare and resist the sight ; and fixed his gaze on some one point which presented to him the reflection of his unmoving countenance. Gradually he saw the features shrink, the glance waver ; and he closed his eyelids, and shut out the stare of the remorseless avenger. But, as if he had been in the presence of a spectre, another moment forced him to look upon the image again. He shuddered at the terrible reality of the shadow ; and

while his eyes wandered away, ravening for a resting-place, but despairing to find one, they encountered on all sides a thousand repetitions of their former misery.

“In his sleep he at first gained some instants of repose ; but gradually the face which he dreaded grew more and more distinct in his dreams, and multiplied to a sea. He woke, with a scream, to find them glaring in myriads around him ; or if he rivetted his look on but one of the shapes, there was his own affrighted, self-petrifying visage, in all its steady outward truth. What would he not have given to be wrapped in darkness ! How much more precious to him than the cup of water to the traveller in a desert, would have been a single spot of blankness which he might have looked at and seen nothing ! For him all the universe was concentrated

into one tormenting form, and that his own. The most momentary look of commencing quiet, the faintest shiver of horror, every change of line or hue, all was flung back upon his heart from those encircling hell-walls. He tore his countenance with his hands to efface the hated lineaments, and still he was pursued by his own bloody and writhing features. Like light augmented into a blaze by innumerable reflectors, his agony was returned to him a millionfold, and its last result was madness and blindness."

"There is probably," observed Arthur, "some truth in the meaning of your story, although I suppose we are not required to believe the fact. But, I confess, I think the tale of Narcissus a fine exaggeration of the Greek passion for beauty."

“Perhaps so,” she replied; “but I do not much like either the subject or the painting; though the colouring seems to me as splendid as if Titian had painted with the pure prismatic elements; and the subject is as brightly and accurately reflected by the canvass as it can have been by the pool. The idea of Narcissus is unworthy of a man of the highest genius, and of the utmost efforts of an art so spiritual as painting. We think of him as of mere animal perfection.”

“I would rather, indeed,” said Arthur, musingly, “see a picture, by Raphael, of Eve beside the fountain. Not that it is easy, or useless, to embody in a work of art a vigorous conception of mere fleshly life. To master and express the idea even of the animal, requires much of what is divine in humanity. Yes,” and

his eyes swept round the apartment till they rested again upon the Narcissus, "these painters were, in truth, men: they felt what their nature is capable of, and the rights that belong to it. I am ashamed when I think that the fashion of the rich, the powerful, and the idle should be lord over the genius and knowledge of which it is scarce worthy to be the slave. The arts are dealt with as an amusement; and that which to the ancient champions was armour and weapons, the means of triumph and immortality, is now a toy and an ornament, the mummery of a fleeting show. As if it were the easy relaxation of a mind to which daily affairs are serious business, to penetrate and comprehend the thought of a great artist; as if it were idleness or sport to cherish and perpetually reproduce an energetic love of the beau-

tiful, the true, and the profound. Nothing good in art or life, not even slight, and, as it would seem, spontaneous emotion, is nourished but by thought. The quick and intuitive perception, and the freedom of imagination itself, are the long outgrowth and ultimate achievement of an inward labour, to which the industry of the mine and forge are but the fluttering of a moth's light wings. But in their follies the crowd, unhappily, are not shamed by our modern artists; for they think that to their success as painters nothing but painting is necessary; not understanding that Raphael and Rubens were men even more than painters; that they cultivated their minds more laboriously than the eye to observe and the hand to execute."

She gave a faint sigh, for she felt that



while he was thinking of painting, she was thinking only of him.

Thus did they proceed ; and mingled at every step the pageants around them with backward glimpses of those years in which they learned together the rudiments of our human life, with its colours of good and evil, splendid in their eyes as the letters of their painted primer. Those bright but speechless beings on the walls, their own unfading recollections, and the visions to which the presence of each gave reality and nearness, all united together to cover them with gladness as the earth is covered by the sunlight. Nor was that gladness cherished the less fondly because with it came a certain chill of insecurity ; as the coldness of the first dawn makes us exult with more delight in the glow which is then breathing up the east.

Old times came back to their memories, when much that was deepest and most affecting in those human glories of painting had been for them a puzzle or a blank. But they knew that they had now within themselves emotions akin to all of most powerful and complex that the colour-poets had imagined.

The youth looked forward to a future unconnected with the past, and more radiant than it; and which, centred nowhere, embraced the world.

The lady brooded over feelings which bound together the past, the present, and the future, in the tie of one intense, uneasy rejoicing; and which had their single centre in her beloved friend.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE political opinions which Arthur had frequently boasted of produced a deep feeling of wonder and anxiety in the mind of his cousin. The more she thought of them, the more evidently did they appear to her altogether unsubstantial and chaotic. The contempt and abhorrence of all privileged classes in all countries which he had expressed to her filled her with dismay; and she resolved to discover, if she could, whether he had sufficient ground for the charges of pro-

fligacy and fatuity which he delighted to bring, more especially, against the French nobility and clergy. For this purpose she resolved to take the first opportunity of conversing with Mademoiselle de Clainville.

In the evening of the day on which Isabel had spent so long a time in the picture-gallery, she retired from the drawing-room to a cabinet reserved for her use, and, during other visits to Deerhill, adorned by her with much both of labour and fancy.

It was a small room adjoining her chamber, and occupying one corner of the building. The view from it was nearly the same as that from the turret in which Arthur slept, but, owing to the greater size of the window, was more fully commanded. The walls were hung

with pale pink, broken at three or four feet from the ground by a broad belt, in the fashion of a frieze, exhibiting a continuous landscape, the work of Isabel in a previous summer. The ornaments, book-case, engravings, mirrors, and alabaster figures, were of an airy, graceful, and virgin character. All the draperies were of white; the ceiling represented a sunny sky, through which an exquisite Psyche was mounting to the heavens, to be reunited with Eros; and two or three stands, imitated from the antique, supported vases of porcelain, in which grew the most fragrant flowers, blooming and delicate as their mistress. Two small cabinets of minerals and shells displayed upon their doors respectively a Gnome and a Nereid, each painted by Isabel.

The lady had now sought this retire-

ment, from the sense of utter incapacity, to mingle in the amusements of the other guests. She sat in her retreat, looking vaguely at the stars and the dim world below them. How happy is it, she thought, that, surrounded and encumbered as we are by the near and the changeable, we are yet permitted to look beyond to the distant and the permanent! Those silent emblems of the Deity, how stupendously have they existed from the beginning, without ever growing old, and ceaselessly moved on together without confusion! They shine upon us from afar with a tranquil ray, which seems reflected from the face of God, and is undimmed by the smoke of created imperfection, and unmingled with the glare of passions such as ours. Roll on, ye orbs, roll on, and trace in characters of

light, upon the blue immensity of the skies, the record that there is something remote from the mists of earth wherein we walk benighted! We survey you with our eyes; we make you the regions of our souls; but ye have nothing in common with the cares that creep and sting beneath the moon, with the baser and more miserable provinces of our nature. Symbols of the regular, the good, the lasting, ye revolve like them in vast, and to us immeasurable cycles, dispensing light, proclaiming order, and irresistibly guiding the motions of our petty planet. When the mind wails to its own dim caverns, and is answered only by the dead and dreary echoes of its lamentations, it may still delight to believe that it hears your solemn, many-chorded harmonies; and while we behold around us the

writhed and darkened brows of those we love, and the more terrible reflection of our own features, we turn from the countenances and the self that haunt us, to the bright aspect of those millions of worlds among which there is no tumult, no wandering, nor any shadow of decay.

While Isabel thus meditated, she sat near the window, looking sideways at the heavens. The lights in the chamber threw a brilliant illumination round her person, and over her exquisite features, and the full tresses of her hair. Her small hands and rounded arms drooped carelessly and gracefully. The gleam fell soft and bright upon her pearly brow, her motionless fingers, and some of the beautiful outlines of her half-shaded neck and bosom, and glittered sharply on the clustered jewels in her necklace; the azure



of the sky showed deep and still through the window behind her; and thus seen, she appeared to belong but half to earth, and rather as if disclosed from those ethereal regions on which her eyes were fixed.

Thus was she beheld by Mademoiselle de Clainville, who now entered the room to give Isabel a lesson in Latin, a language with which the education of the French lady had made her familiarly acquainted. She came, bearing in her hand a small vellum-bound volume of selections from St. Augustine, for such and so eloquent was the book which the two friends had been reading.

"Am I disturbing you?" said the young Frenchwoman.

"Not at all, dear Agatha," answered Isabel—"I cannot bear to call you

Mademoiselle de Clainville—I was only looking at the stars. You see the night is so beautiful as to give some excuse for my idleness. Did you ever know the sky more brilliant, even on the continent?”

“Perhaps not,” answered Agatha. “I have more frequently looked at it since I have been in England than I ever did before. All that I see around me on earth has altered; but the skies continue the same in character every where and for ever; our changes of mind or place do not affect them; they are never touched by the passions of mankind. I gaze at them here, as I gazed at them from my Norman home, and see in them the splendid works of an Almighty hand. But, I fear, we are too prone to substitute admiration of natural objects for religious principle and love.”

"I have neither been taught by suffering, nor have taught myself," replied Isabel, "so to narrow the range of feelings permitted by Christianity. I am afraid that your life must have been a severe school of religion."

"For many years," answered the foreign maiden, "I had no conception of what suffering and difficulty are, save so far as I gained it by the instructions of my preceptors. I was early placed in a convent, and the thousand confused and wandering emotions of childhood were governed and arranged according to the precepts of my church, so that with some labour and many delays and relapses, I at last learned to see in myself only an instrument for performing the duties which God has assigned to us."

"And did you never feel any longings,"

inquired her friend, "for the active world from which you were excluded?"

"Alas!" exclaimed Agatha, "how you mistake the nature of a conventual life. The busy and frivolous indolence of society is far less active than a course of regular cheerful duty. To me there was in a religious existence less of vacancy, less of uneasiness, than to almost any human being. This arose in part from circumstances which, if you are not afraid of a long story, I will readily explain.

"The convent in which I spent the greater part of my life was founded and richly endowed by one of my ancestors. She was heiress of a family among the wealthiest and noblest of my country; and being early left a widow, devoted herself entirely to her children: these were two boys; the elder of whom, as he

grew up, displayed a decided vocation to a religious life. The Countess Diane, as possessed by all the feelings of her rank, was overwhelmed with sorrow at the thought that a youth who represented two ancient and illustrious houses of nobles and warriors, should prefer the cloister to the courts of princes, and the chapel to the field. She commanded, she intreated, she told him that her life was at stake, and threatened that the curse of his dead mother would pursue him into the deepest retirements of his cell, and wither the heart of his devotion. He covered his hair shirt with armour, and while he grasped the sword, a tear dropped upon the page of a missal which he thrust into his bosom and bore to the camp. He left his mother's side on the first of the new year ; and before the end

of February, he died on the fatal field of Pavia.

“I have seen that missal; and its illuminated pages deeply stained with the blood of its owner. After this event, his mother at first became insane. Having recovered her reason, she consecrated to the church all the property of which she was mistress, leaving to her remaining son his magnificent paternal estates, and founded the convent in which she spent the whole of her after-life, and in which I was brought up.

“My elder brother, Adolphe, for I had an elder brother, was animated even from his childhood by the same noble spirit of devotion which distinguished his collateral ancestor, and the likeness to the angels which was visible, even in the features of his infancy, disclosed itself

with greater brightness every day. It was he who first spoke to me of truth, and religion, and God. While he pointed out the dark brown stains of blood shed so many ages ago by a pious heart upon the holy volume, he implored me not to be unworthy of that sainted memory; and he had a reverence and affection in his boyish face which indicated, as if by the finger of heaven, that he too would die with eagerness in the faith of the church and of its martyrs. That promise of his early years has been fearfully fulfilled; but I need not annoy you by an anticipation of what I shall soon have to describe.

“For a few years we were brought up together in the country. Our poor father spent the greater part of his time at Versailles, where he held a distinguished

post. My mother died when I was four years old, and Adolphe and I were left very much to ourselves in a provincial mansion. We played together all day long through those tapestried galleries, with their ranges of family paintings, and among the leaf-strown walks, terraces, and fountains. In these childish years, before any one else had thought of instructing me, I learned from my brother to read the lives of the saints, whose miracles he recounted to me, and whose portraits he delighted to excite my fancy by displaying. The irregular lessons of a good, but old and inactive ecclesiastic, had been his only assistance in acquiring the knowledge, of which he communicated a portion to me. I profited, unhappily, but too little from his affectionate teaching and gentle conversation.



“ Yet what progress I made gave him the deepest satisfaction ; and when, under his guidance, I had succeeded in scrawling a text, or learning by heart a portion of the Vulgate, which he explained to me with the zeal of an infant John or Timotheus, he would run to the old white-haired domestic, whom of our attendants we most loved, and tell him of my achievements.

“ This old man, who had served and been dangerously wounded under my father, smiled, with tears in his eyes, and shook his head at these evidences of my brother's religious disposition ; and in fear that the taste of Adolphe would unfit him for his future station, gave him arms adapted to his strength, and offered to teach him the use of them ; but my seraphic brother having consented to learn

the sword exercise, was told one day by the old man, that a particular motion of the weapon was that by which he had once killed an antagonist, when the boy threw down the sword, and, bursting into tears, declared that he would never again study any mode of destroying his fellow-creatures. Our good Pierre was in despair; and his affection for us, but particularly for Adolphe, could never afterwards find any means of displaying itself so agreeable to us as by taking down from the shelves the most richly illustrated volumes of devotion which he could find in all the library.

“Forgive me that I weep at the recollection of these happy days. I shall shed no tears when I come to speak of what is most terrible in my past life.

“The character of my brother, so dif-

ferent from that usually found among the young men of our age, was not, as you might perhaps suppose, made feeble and timorous by his soft and mild devotion. When I was six years old, and he about ten, we went out together early in a winter morning, and ran about the grounds and park in keen delight at seeing the earth covered with snow, and the wide trellis-work of the forest branches all fringed with sparkling frost. I remember that we took with us a slice of bread, which Adolphe taught me to crumble and fling to the small birds deprived by the weather of their nourishment, and hopping and fluttering over the glitter of the snow and among the ice-barbed statues and fountains.

“We went on until we reached a small eminence, on which stood a half-ruined

and ivy-covered tower. The lower part was a hall of considerable size, and surrounded with old banners and armour. The upper stories had at one time been divested of their ancient feudal character, and changed into ornamented banqueting rooms; but the furniture had all decayed or been removed; and the part which had been used as a pleasure-house was even more dreary and dismantled than the lower story of the building. We had frequently visited the mouldering structure; and Adolphe had helped me to climb the broken stairs, and so gain from the battlements a view of a vast range of country, and of the distant convent of St. Agnes, founded by a lady of our blood. The door of the old hall commonly stood open, and the floor was heaped with leaves, drifted by the wind. When we

now reached it we saw that some snow had also beaten through the door-way.

“ We were about to enter, and anticipated the pleasure of seeing the whole prospect made white and brilliant, when we were stopped by the voice of a woman who was coming up the opposite side of the ascent, and implored us to give her aid. In making her way under a bank at the foot of the hill, from the cattle-shed in which she had slept, the accumulated snow had fallen upon her. She had rescued her infant, and was now carrying it out of danger. An elder child still remained half buried amid the drift ; and she entreated us to take charge of the baby that she might return to the assistance of her daughter. She laid her wailing burthen upon the leaves in a nook of the tower ; and, while I remained to

take care of it, Adolphe accompanied her down the hill.

“ I had been trying for some minutes to soothe the baby, when I heard a rustling and a breathing in a far corner of the gloomy chamber. I looked more intently, and I discovered some large animal couched among the leaves. At this instant the beast growled and rose, and I screamed. It was a wolf, which, driven from the forests by famine, now sprang against the infant and myself. Adolphe rushed into the tower, snatched a rusty sword that hung amidst the armour on the wall, and drove the weapon through the side of the ferocious animal. It still had strength to wound him severely before he destroyed it ; and when the beggar returned from the house with a servant, he was insensible through loss of blood.

“In the course of the following summer we were separated. My elder brother—I thank God, the younger still remains!—was sent to college, and I to the convent of St. Agnes, where my father designed me to receive my education before I should enter the world. The convent was destined for the reception of only twelve nuns, all of noble birth. They were accustomed to undertake the education of no ladies but the descendants of their foundress, and I was the only child then living among them. Praise be to St. Agnes, they never were remiss in instructing the children of the poor, many of whom daily attended in the school; but habitual companions of my own age I had none.

“Nor did I regret this. I wished for nothing, dreamed of nothing beyond

what I then possessed, except the kindness of Adolphe, and this I believed it was impossible I could ever again experience in the way in which I had formerly enjoyed it. Yet he still maintained a constant intercourse with me by means of letters, in which he described whatever he thought, or felt, or saw, and which were instinct with more than all the affection and intelligence he had before manifested. His accounts of what he had observed in society filled me with the terror and disgust they had excited in him; and I sympathised with all his sorrow at being compelled in any degree to mingle with persons whose conduct he detested, instead of entirely devoting himself to religion.

“ Thus I lived happy, constantly experiencing how blessed is the grace of God,



and how powerful the intercession of the saints. The instruction of those noble and pious ladies, together with my own thoughts, and with the objects which I observed or read of, surrounded my belief in Christianity with a thousand emblems and illustrations.

“ I have still before me, though they now exist no longer, the arched cloister, with its pillars encircled by honeysuckle and jasmine, so that the sunshine upon the pavement within was divided by graceful and leafy shadows ; the green lawn and knots of blooming plants in the centre ; and the tufted woods, which rose beyond one side of the enclosure. The chapel was dim with coloured glass ; but, to me, it was illumined as if by the light of the farthest heaven ; and though my chamber was narrow and lowly, I found it a uni-

verse of cheerful thoughts. The grave countenances of the nuns occur to my memory as the types of all that is most serene and venerable; for the eyes that were sedulously averted from the world, looked with almost instinctive kindness on each other and on me.

“The curse of the Lord, whom the ungodly outraged, weighs upon the destroyers of that tranquil house, and the persecutors of those pious and humble devotees.

“I had been for six years an inmate of those holy walls when my father died. Immediately afterwards, my brother, then Comte de Clainville, came to see me. He was tall and pale, and clothed, as he was, in black, his air might have appeared to the world more solemn than became his years. But to me he was familiar and

earnest in his benignity, more even than of old. I thanked heaven that he had wealth, and learning, and talents, that he was a perfect gentleman, and a good Catholic ; but, oh ! how much more that he was my gentle and affectionate brother, one whom I felt myself the better for loving. He seemed to understand my mind, and to belong to it more completely than any one else on earth. All that I felt to be peculiarly my own, to be to me as a private possession, connected itself with my remembrances of Adolphe, and my attachment to him.

“ I clung to him the more closely when I heard in greater detail than before his impressions of the society which he had seen at Paris. He told me of men who had nourished their understandings that they might make them the most efficient

possible slaves of their vanity and their senses. He described the busy, hollow, unsatisfactory pursuits of those who, under pretence of cultivating their minds, really elevated the baser powers and tendencies over the nobler ; who, under the mask of superior tolerance, boasted of their indifference to all things precious and exalted ; and who found, I am ashamed to say, in the conduct of a corrupt court and a licentious capital, but too decisive authorities for their miserable doctrines. From him I heard of women who had flung aside the timidity of the female intellect, only that they might adopt the vilest errors of masculine inquiry ; and of crowds of high-born ladies, who seemed to think that exemption even from the decencies of ordinary life was the privilege of their station. Alas ! what madness was there

in forgetting that virtues which stand upon a height require, if they would appear of natural size, to be of a loftier standard than those which occupy the common level of the earth.

“ I shuddered at the account of the profligacy, frivolity, and selfishness, which seemed to pervade whatever ought to have been most reverend and pure in my country. My brother went on to warn me, that this impiety could not endure unpunished. He said, that the vengeance of God was only pausing in its course ; and that the kingdom, and its institutions, and its religion, and the foremost of its inhabitants, would all infallibly be overtaken by some astounding shock.

“ He spoke to me of the maidens who, in different ages, and various circumstances, had confessed and suffered for the faith,

those fearful and tender, but indomitable martyrs, who had preferred the torture and its rendings to the choicest pleasures of earth, and had put on with joy the scorching flames, as the wedding garment of their heavenly nuptials. When he had incited me by these examples, he asked me whether I too should be prepared, in case of need, to undergo misery, shame, and death, rather than turn aside an inch from the rocky and wintry path, to the green meadows and rich gardens of worldly enjoyment. I sank weeping into his arms, and we vowed together, that no custom should awe, or temptation delude us into compliance with the practices of an evil day.

“ From that hour I began to think seriously of devoting myself to a religious life. My design was approved by my

brother, who on his part also resolved to become an ecclesiastic. He took up his residence in the house which as children we had both of us inhabited ; and there employed his time in study, and in superintending, with the aid of a tutor, the education of my younger brother. I saw him almost daily ; and I always watched for the moment of the afternoon at which I might expect him. His high reputation, and the connexion of my ancestors with the convent, facilitated our intercourse : nor was there any impediment interposed between us while for several years we spent together many hours of every week.

“ I observed that the character of Adolphe received constant accessions of firmness and austerity, though with no diminution of his benevolence, or his affection for me. Under the influence of

his zealous exhortations, it would have been impossible not to discover and love the beauty of a religious life ; and I had but little of merit in the resolution which I finally took and put in practice, of becoming a nun.

“ On the day of my profession Adolphe was one of the officiating clergy. I had retired from his presence and that of the crowd to my chamber ; and though before the ceremony I had been disturbed and miserable, I was now in a state of serenity and happiness such as I had never hitherto experienced. Involuntarily I sank upon the floor, while I felt as if my sight had pierced the roof, and was looking into the depths of heaven. All that I had ever done, and known, and loved, and been, burst upon me in one broad revelation ; and I seemed to myself



to live over again, in the space of a few moments, all the emotions that had stirred my mind, from the first vague and glimmering consciousness of infancy till that hour in which I trusted that, by faith, I had become the elected bride of heaven.

“ Through and over these intuitions, for they were far more than recollections, of the past, arose before my soul the immeasurable hierarchy of creatures, where, below the dazzling throne at the summit, and the awful forms which were hidden in its splendour, lay the wide blue middle region, filled with the starry wounds of the martyrs, and scarcely distinguishable shapes of cherubim and seraphim, whose thronging wings were like a rush of sunbeams.

“ Nearer to our twilight horizon was a

sea of evening clouds, peopled by the half-spiritual existences of a more glorious nature, drinking with their upturned countenances, on which traces of tears were yet visible, the effulgence that poured over them from above. Among these I thought I recognised my brother, mounting, as it were, to his natural home, and nestling in his shadow a feeble and tremulous shape, which I scarcely dared to acknowledge as wearing my own lineaments.

“ All except those two figures soon vanished, or changed their form ; and instead of the holy pageant, a broad and yellow beam, such as you must often have seen the last pale radiance of an autumn sun, seemed faintly traced along the twilight. Through this one brilliant star was shining ; and beside it, I again

beheld the serene and resplendent countenance of my brother. Amid the airy wavings of his vesture I still appeared to myself to cling, and to float behind him up the empyrean. Above the star, rolled on in interminable rounds the pearly vapour of spiritual existence ; and below the star, it streamed up from the grey earth and the faded azure of the sea. In this endless gush of mist from the fountain of regenerated humanity, were the white heads of age, resembling clouded moons ; and rings of infant souls circling and dancing upwards, like garlands of flowers, or the sunbows in a fountain ; but nothing distinct, save those two beings for ever rising higher and higher as the rising planet bore aloft that circle of its light in which they seemed to live.

“ I lost all sense of my corporeal pre-

sence, and felt myself transfigured into that ethereal shape which still soared on incessantly.

“ I had no life but that which thrilled, with its fine pulsations, the unearthly bosom and lightened limbs of the heavenly phantom.

“ I heard a low, perpetual, breathing chime of melody which accompanied the flowing of that animated tide ; now feebly broken by whisperings from the lower world, and now expanding and deepening into harmony with the mightier music of the powers on high. Still the glorified face of my brother was above me ; and I seemed, by gazing and gazing, to imbibe more and more of his influence, and to rise more rapidly from the earth, and become more worthy of God.

“ While I was absorbed in these celes-

tial visions, the evening had closed in ; but I was unconscious of outward circumstances, and was only roused by a hoarse sound of tumult which seemed to come from a distance, but was nevertheless sufficiently marked by its contrast with the ordinary tranquillity of our abode.

“ It ceased for a moment, and was then renewed with more of distinctness and violence. I listened in much terror, till one of the nuns broke into my chamber, and told me to follow her to the chapel. There I found assembled all the sisters, and with them some of the visitors who had been present at that day’s ceremony, and the ecclesiastics who had officiated.

“ I learned that a mob from a neighbouring town were about to attack, and probably to destroy the convent.

“ The visitors, with the exception of

old Pierre, speedily retired, and left only the clergy and the sisterhood. We, too, it was determined after a hasty consultation, should endeavour to avoid the onset of the misguided crowd; and my brother desired us to take refuge in his house if, under the guidance of Pierre, we could find the means of reaching it. I saw his eye glance for a moment at me; but he announced firmly that he would not leave the sacred building without having made an attempt to save it. Two other clergymen agreed to follow his example, and we left them together before the altar: but we were instantly compelled to return, for we found that the crowd had assembled at a little distance from both the gates, by one of which we had proposed to pass.

“Again we sought the chapel; and,

on learning that our path was occupied, Adolphe at once decided that an effort ought to be made to open a way for our escape; a resolution in which his brethren acquiesced.

“Clothed in their sacerdotal robes, bearing the pyx, and followed by the nuns, they advanced to the great gate, which they caused to be flung open, and at a few yards in front, they encountered the first comers of the insane rabble. They were checked for an instant by the appearance of our procession, and my brother immediately addressed them. But while he spoke, I saw with terror their ranks thickening from behind, glaring with torches, and threatening with pikes, swords, and fire arms. A hundred discordant cries began to interrupt him; and curses and blasphemies, and innumerable

expressions of human wickedness, of which I had no previous conception, were ejaculated against us, and even against God.

“ The calm and earnest dignity of Adolphe still held on its way ; but with decreasing influence. This had lasted but for a very few minutes, when a shot was fired by some one in the rear of the robbers, which struck my brother’s uplifted hand. The consecrated host fell to the earth, and was instantly trampled under foot by the rushing multitude. In horror we regained the chapel, and my brother was hurried after us by the throng. We clung to the rails of the altar ; and waving them back with his shattered and bleeding hand, he placed himself before us. They had already begun to tear down the ornaments ; and the crowd which had before met us



on the other road had attacked and set fire to the dormitory and refectory. The thick smoke rolled in, and added to the danger of our situation.

“Our presence and the heroism of Adolphe restrained but for a moment those who were in front of us. He laid the hand which yet remained unhurt upon the shoulder of the first who leaped over the railing; and he was in the same moment laid at my feet by the blow of a pike. I fainted on his body, and they flung me aside that they might heap upon him a thousand additional wounds and indignities.

“When I recovered my senses, I found myself in the cemetery of the convent, and Pierre was stooping over me, with his white hairs wetted by the blood from a severe wound received in defending me.

Two or three of the nuns were with us ; but, in my pain and dizziness, I scarcely recognized them, for I was stupified by the horrors I had witnessed, confused by the noises of ferocious tumult which still resounded near me, and almost stifled by the smoke that gushed in whirlwinds from my burning home, and poisoned the whole atmosphere. My companions supported me through the woods to a cottage at no great distance, where we were reluctantly admitted to pass the night.

“ That miserable night I spent in tears and agony. The death of my brother seemed to shake the very foundations of my mind; for, though I had before strenuously endeavoured to discipline myself in obedience to the will of God, I had derived the greater part of my resolution from the encouragement and aid of Adolphe. In

all those consoling hopes of being able for the future to lead a religious life without disgrace to my vows and calling, I had, consciously or unconsciously, relied on him. The very root of my strength was cut; and what could the blossoms but droop and perish?

“ In my rashness and despair, I cried aloud on God to restore to me my brother, or to take me also from the earth; and I, who but that day had sworn to set myself apart as a dedicated offering to heaven, now blasphemed against the hand of the Lord with all the blindness of heathenism, and the presumption of infidelity. The two religious ladies who accompanied me were scared at my insanity, and blamed, with just severity, the wildness of my grief and fury. But I little cared that night for the condemnation of men or

angels ; and I believe that, had our Divine Master himself descended to reprove me, I should have outraged even the presence of my Saviour.

“ The next day I was conveyed to the Chateau de Clainville, where I found my younger brother, Philippe, confined to his bed by illness. His malady had prevented him from being present the day before at the convent ; and to this, probably, I owe it that I have not yet lost the fair locks of his youth. I regained some share of calmness by the necessity I was under of attending him. I watched in his chamber all night, accompanied only by the memory of my murdered Adolphe ; and while I listened to the breathing of the patient, I thought of all the thousand occasions which marked in my remembrance the tenderness and intimacy of

Adolphe's affection. The energy and gentleness of his pious exhortations recurred to my mind, and the unnumbered, forcible, simple, and beautiful expressions in which he had been accustomed to embody his religious thoughts.

“These made a sublime contrast with the passionate and unchristian emotions to which I had so lately given way; and I knelt and prayed for pardon. I do not require that others should credit my assertion; but for myself it is sufficient to know that in those moments the heavens were opened to my view, and I saw my sainted brother looking on me with the superhuman expression of calm and devout benignity which his countenance had assumed, even in the flesh, at the instant of his frightful death. Once and again before I escaped from France, and since

I have been in England, have I had that strengthening revelation : and though, to every one but myself, this part of my story may appear a fancy or a dream, to me it is more certain, and more precious, than all beside that I have at any time learned or experienced.

“ In consequence, as I believe, of his intercession, my younger brother regained his health, and we escaped together from France, whither he has since returned as an emissary from my expatriated countrymen, in the hope that his youth will protect him from suspicion. Providence perhaps designs that I shall lose him also—its will be done !”

She paused ; and Isabel said to her, in a low and hesitating voice, “ There is one question which I am very desirous to ask you. When the ecstatic emotions

which you described have been subdued, and those supernatural images have for a time passed away, do you never feel that the impossibility of reproducing them with all their former liveliness, seems to throw a dimness and uncertainty over the whole subject to which they belong? I should fear for myself, from the little experience I have had of something approaching to them, that the want of these celestial visitations, which we cannot always have, must beget discontent; and that the recollection of their splendour will darken by the contrast, whatever there is of light and comfort in our daily world, and more tranquil feelings."

"Therein," replied the Nun, "is, indeed, a powerful temptation, a severe trial, from which, when I first endured it, no refuge occurred to my thoughts.

But I held fast by my obedience to my spiritual superiors ; and under their direction I have found that the sorest doubt and distress could be in some degree relieved, by the sedulous performance of every humble duty. If it often be in vain that we strive for the visions of beatitude which never can in this life become the nourishment of every day, yet is it always possible for us to still our hearts by watchfulness, diligence, and prayer ; happy if we could be made sure that the fretful eagerness of our longings to see the veil withdrawn from the face of God, is not itself a sin requiring to be followed and mastered by the hardest penitence.

“ I have spoken to you by far too long, about myself and my own affairs. Forgive me, I entreat you. I have met



but few persons who could understand, or would at all care for my feelings; and there are moments in which it is a satisfaction for the most constant and best disciplined minds to obtain the sympathy of others. This evening recalls to me hours of similar tranquillity and loveliness which I have enjoyed with my brother. It was through such soft transparent obscurity as this, and when the stars were glittering as brightly as at present, that I have been permitted to commune with his blessed spirit. Had you known him, you at least would not despise me for entertaining a belief on this point in which you cannot share."

The tears of Isabel fell upon the hand of the Nun while she pressed it to her bosom.

## CHAPTER V.

THE conversation with Agatha had not taken exactly the turn which Isabel would have wished. It helped her but little in forming an opinion as to the justice of Arthur's views. That little, however, inclined her to believe that he might be in some degree right in his wishes and speculations with regard to France, although she could not perceive the propriety of introducing into England a reform similar to that which might perhaps have become necessary on the Continent. Her education, her

habits, and her character, all alike unfitted her to estimate justly the grounds of her cousin's political theory, and she perceived only the absurdity of practical conclusions which, if the premises of the system be admitted, must be equally applicable to England, France, and Otaheite.

Her thoughts on this subject, and her fears as to the state of her own affections, gave an appearance of constraint to her manner, which was painfully felt by Arthur, and as the time of his departure from Deerhill approached, he became uneasy and dissatisfied to a degree which he could not himself account for. The state of his mind was peculiarly observable during dinner some weeks after his arrival: he was silent, absent, and disturbed, nor could Mr. Marshall, who sat near him succeed in

establishing a discussion on the mysteries of fly-fishing.

Miss Barrington, who was placed at another part of the table, observed that Coningsby appeared anxious and dispirited, and averse to turn his eyes towards her. When they met in the drawing-room her mode of addressing him was full of a hurried earnestness, instead of that enforced reserve which she had sought to throw around their previous interviews.

She asked if he felt worse in health than before, and there was a trembling in her voice and a quivering of her eyelid, which he did not perceive without agitation, but did not dare decidedly to interpret. His answer was brief and hesitating, and the confusion of both of them increased.

At this moment Mr. Vernon, a young official gentleman, approached them, with that air of self-admiration proper to a man of six-and-twenty, having a place in the Treasury, handsome, fashionable, and a fool. He and Coningsby, as it will readily be conceived, were not particularly intimate. Arthur thought that he despised the placeman for his insignificance, but really detested him for his party. On the other hand Mr. Vernon affected to talk with condescension of the errors in Mr. Coningsby's politics, "errors the more lamentable if we consider his birth and fortune, and the abilities which for so young a man, and one who had no experience of affairs, really gave considerable promise." The man in office now addressed Isabel, and asked her to sing, which not knowing

what else to do, she readily consented to.

Arthur was in no mood for listening to a song sung by his cousin under the patronage and encouragement of Mr. Vernon. He left the room, and turned his steps towards the terrace, then illuminated by a lovely sunset. In passing through the hall which stretched from the front to the back of the house, a servant gave him a letter from London. He looked at the address, and appeared agitated as he recognised the handwriting. He escaped hastily to the garden, and thence to the park, where he turned to one side, and was soon beyond the ken of any eye which might be looking from the windows.

He stood beneath a large old oak, and seeming half reluctant to open the

letter, lifted up his eyes and gazed at the landscape. The wide surfaces of green, and the darker masses and tufts which divided them, were covered, or rather imbued, with the quiet, lucid softness of evening. The clouds were sleeping in the sky, and the only change among them was the succession of colours which passed gently into each other, and harmonized exquisitely with whatever was visible around. The meek shadows of the trees lay lovingly and confidingly on the grass, while the broad rays from the west, like streams of amber vapour from a golden vase, silently melted upon the rough stems and manyfigured foliage. All was still as an infant's slumber, save when the solitary cry of a deer sounded afar off, and the mind pursued it to the indistinct horizon.

The idea of Isabel had been growing more delicious to Arthur. She now visited his thoughts with the bright ethereal aspect, which befitted the Genius of the hour and prospect. In his imagination she was mingled, he knew not how, with the mild splendour and airy pageantry of the western heavens. Her glances seemed to tremble, her cheek to glow, her garments to wave through the silken embroidery of those fairy tents; and her spirit was around him in the low breathings of the woods, and the solemn tenderness of that tranquil time.

He looked, meditated, sighed; but still the letter was in his hand, and thinking his weakness unworthy of one who would reform a world, he tore open the paper. It ran as follows:—



“MY DEAR CONINGSBY,

“I am sorry to say that since you were last among us some changes have taken place, which, although of no great importance, are rather unfavourable. Three or four of our friends have diverged from the main and steady stream, into swamps and shallows, or down cataracts. Luttrell has thought of nothing for the last month but a parallel which he is writing between Falstaff and Hamlet, whom he maintains to be essentially the same character in different circumstances. Aylmer also is dipping himself in ink; but his treatise is intended to prove that the sin of Adam arose entirely from inattention to the doctrine of the rights of man, as he had no business to eat the forbidden fruit without consulting all his descendants on a question, his decision of which would affect

their interests. We think that he wants to reconcile his own doctrines to those of the Church of England, because some relation has promised him a good living. Baily, whose birth was, you know, very humble, has lately gained admittance into fashionable society, and in spite of his democratic opinions, has fallen in love with the daughter of a lord. She flirted with him, laughed at him, and at last put an end to the acquaintance, and he is dying of a broken heart and goats'-milk cheese, or consoling himself with a farmer's daughter, I am not sure which, in the Welsh mountains. Miller took a few weeks ago to acting. He said that the stage was the best of instruments for inculcating political truth, and applied at some theatre to be allowed to play Sici-nius in Coriolanus, maintaining to his

friends that he would so fill the part as to make Caius Marcius despicable in comparison with him ; but I believe he was hissed and pelted as often as he appeared. Since then, his hopes of accomplishing a revolution, and his faith in the virtues of the people, have diminished wonderfully.

“ These are but few and trifling defections. On the other hand, the harvest has been ripening, and the numbers also of the reapers have increased. The fields will, before long, be ripe for the sickle, and our harvest-home will be indeed a triumph. You will not have cause to be ashamed of our enterprise, nor, as I trust, of your associates. We are a larger, a stronger, a more compact, a more enlightened, in short, a more mature body. I know not that delay can now be of any

service. If the blow were struck to-morrow it would necessarily be successful; but for want of good counsel, the blow will not be struck to-morrow, nor, perhaps, for many a day after. It is on this account that I write to you.

“ You, of course, know what game has been played elsewhere. The players have had more practice than we, and unless they show us how to manage our hand we shall make nothing of it. It has been determined to send an ambassador to our friends abroad; and I am directed to offer you the appointment. The affair is still secret; and if you have any particular reason for declining the office, some one else shall be named. I can assure you there is no disposition to bind you strictly to the agreement; but if you have any hesitation, say so at once; for

he who goes on this errand must have unlimited caution, firmness, courage, and devotion: the slightest touch of reluctance would ruin all. We must know your decision, if possible, before Friday; for on that night there will be a full meeting. I should, I own, have no slight degree of pride in seeing you invested with the functions I have alluded to; as I had first, my dear Coningsby, the pleasure of introducing you to the mysteries, and your subsequent achievements or lapses, if the latter were possible, must in some degree affect my authority among our friends. It is desirable that the envoy should set out as soon after Friday as circumstances will permit.

“ I confess my fingers tingle with emotion while I write of these things. To-day, representative of a band of humble

patriots ;—to-morrow, probably, ambassador from one free and mighty people to another!—The destiny of three nations, perhaps of the world, is in our hands.

“ Believe me, my dear Coningsby,

“ Both on private and public grounds,

“ Your’s faithfully,

“ RICHARD OSBORNE.

“ P.S. The cause may be greatly assisted by the judicious and immediate application of about 100*l.*, which if you can spare, and will send me by return of post, I will account for in the books.”

The light just sufficed to make Arthur master of the contents of this letter. His hand dropped when he had read it, and he looked towards the ground. The writer had been his college-acquaintance, and it was only under his auspices that

Arthur had ever made any approach to substantiating outwardly his political speculations. With what a weight did he now feel pressed, while he thought of his plans, his promises, his associates, his pledged honour, his sworn oath !

Coningsby had a mind of restless, seething activity, but it needed to be supplied from without. And now, early in his manhood, so little did he suffice to his own satisfaction, that he could appease his craving for excitement only by yoking himself to a scheme of universal reform, of which the purpose was to let every human being follow his own devices, and which was thus to produce unmingled happiness.

His devotion to his new cause was absolute and eager : for it he would assuredly have died—for it alone he de-

signed to live. The splendour of the object prevented him from perceiving the total impossibility of attaining it, and the criminality of the means by which alone any considerable number of persons would be likely to make the attempt. For his was no petty plan of national improvement, of adapting institutions by degrees to the gradual changes in society, of working the same kind of good as that which great men have wrought in all times and lands, and by similar means to theirs. But he thought himself to be lord of a nostrum whereby every man, without exertion or self-denial on his own part, would become good as the best, and wiser than the wisest of former days. Vanity was not the chief characteristic of his mind, and yet he was firmly persuaded of this, and believed that he could in five



minutes explain to any person of ordinary understanding, by what unhappy arrangement of social interests it was that mankind had always been miserable, and by what easy and simple political sleight of hand the whole world might be made happy for ever.

That he should have begun to think in this way at eighteen, and four or five years after should have been completely wedded to the doctrine, is not wonderful. It is somewhat more remarkable that he should have become intimate with Osborne, and active in a political society of which he was a leader. These speculations, however, thus embodied, had given their own direction to all Arthur's feelings ; and probably but for this reason he would have been an impassioned and declared lover of Isabel Barrington ; for

the notion of paying his addresses to his beautiful cousin, at some future time, had frequently, though vaguely and at a distance, floated before his eyes ; and there was a large store of quiet affection for her laid up in the recesses of his heart. But she had never been the mistress of his habitual thoughts, never supplied him with a permanent motive and purpose.

He had now been for some time withdrawn from all direct political influences, at least from all such as could produce any considerable effect on him. His personal feelings had gone nigh to triumph over his general opinions ; and as we are told that often, if a natural forest be burnt down, a harvest of flowers will grow from the ashes, his latent affection began to bloom when his public creed and hopes had lost a part of their power.

The image of Isabel, the playmate of his childhood, and now invested with all that is sweetest in woman, so lovely, so high-minded, so full of gentle feeling, and rich fancy, and graceful accomplishment, a being all moulded of light,—together with the mere faint suspicion of her profound and adoring, though untold attachment, might well lay prostrate his devotion to a theory, and develop whatever seed of love existed in his breast.

When he saw her looking into his soul with those eyes so brilliant, so informed with meaning, and then so timorous, while her voice trembled under the burthen of an emotion which she would rather die than express, he could fain have flung himself at her feet, and implored the boon he had so long neglected.

His agitation had driven him forth to that solitude where the twilight was now gathered; and it seemed as if his destiny had sent him the warning which he had perused by the help of day's last light. What, he fancied, if with that sinking sun has vanished also the latest gleam of my happiness?

So earnest and overmastering was now his affection for his cousin, that all else appeared to him empty and delusive. But here was the outward sign, the letter, which he crushed while he thought of it, with his working fingers, come to remind him of resolutions cherished for years, and duties enforced by solemn oaths. There was fierce war within his heart. The one passion, the one conviction of his brief manhood began, for the first time, to appear but a project as enormous and as

fleeting as the cloud pyramids of the sky; a mere logical hypothesis, without real worth; unimportant to him, and unconnected with any genuine human feeling. But no, he thought, it was, it must be, the one central, productive truth, in which all of most precious to himself individually, was combined with all of most useful and glorious to the world. What, then, was Isabel but a resplendent demon, sent to tempt him from the way of honour and of right? The law of his conscience, and the futurity of his country were garnered up within this cause; and if one came to him in the form of an angel of light, and pointed out another object, he would forswear his faith in the beautiful and the good, and believe the shape to be a fiend disguised.

So—for his mind recurred to the fan-

tastic studies of his boyhood—when the alchemist has filled and refilled the alembic and the bath of Mary; when the furnace has burnt for years; when a thousand retorts have burst, and a thousand crucibles been destroyed; when the withered ascetic, starving into old age and decrepitude, with the hope of boundless wealth and youth eternal, is inhaling the fiery vapour, on his watch for the moment of projection, suddenly appears beside him a graceful and blooming, but false enchantress, and seeks to withdraw him from the concoction of the elixir by the allurements of her voluptuous beauty.

Few there were, thought Coningsby, of these laborious philosophers, who resisted to the end the wiles of the malignant powers; and of those few, not one,

alas ! has left behind his secret. I, too, am struggling for the swift restoration of my race, but with a wiser spirit and in a surer path. With clearer views, and hopes that have scarcely even their mixture of selfish motive, shall I be as frail of purpose as the weakest and least successful of them ?

Thus meditating, he had conjured up for himself an image of Isabel as in truth a fair and deadly witch, the deluding enemy of his fame and his usefulness. He determined to leave Deerhill the next morning ; and armed with this resolution, stepped into the pale combination of twilight and moonshine which now filled the air.

He knew not why, but he had hitherto unconsciously been standing still, or pacing irregularly, amid a broken clump of trees, of which the old oak that

had first shaded him was placed conspicuously in the front, a veteran warder.

He now walked rapidly towards the house, with a freer tread and bolder bearing than before ; and through the glimmer of the forest, and the moonlight of the grassy glades, he soon came in sight of the old mansion, and the flight of steps leading to its terrace.



## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Coningsby was approaching the terrace he suddenly heard the sound of singing, which seemed close at hand. After pausing for an instant he became sure that it was the voice of Isabel, and that it proceeded from the summer-house.

Instead of ascending the steps he walked to one side, and was soon in the dark shadow of a horse-chestnut tree, and in front of the little building.

The side opposite to him was entirely

occupied by a large open arch, and under this stood Miss Barrington. She sang no more than a few notes, and then became perfectly still and silent. Arthur gazed and gazed, and the beautiful creature before him grew at every moment more deeply into his soul. She turned, and he thought she was going away; and in another minute he had mounted the steps, and reached the alcove.

Isabel had seated herself at a small table which the summer-house contained, and had leaned her head upon her hands. The moonlight streamed on her through the arch, and he paused at seeing the profoundest dejection exhibited in so lovely a form. She turned her face, and when she saw him she made a faint exclamation.

“Is then my presence so terrible to you, Isabel?” said Arthur.

Even by that wan ineffectual light, he could perceive the deep blush which overspread her forehead, cheeks, and neck. But recovering herself in a few seconds, she evaded his question by replying, “my head ached, and as every one was employed at cards, music, or conversation, I escaped to the open air, which I knew would be of service to me.”

“The evening,” he said, “is indeed delicious; and though I shall soon be in a land of brighter skies and milder breath than this, its evenings will want what makes for me the principal charm of this lovely night.”

“Are you indeed about to leave England?” she asked. “Arthur, we have

known each other so long and well that there is no need of compliments between us. Only tell me whither you are going, and how soon."

"I shall set out for London," he replied, "to-morrow, and thence in three or four days for Paris."

"Paris!" she exclaimed, "you are not going thither without some hidden object. I have no title to ask what are your intentions. But it is a fearful whirlwind into which you are throwing yourself. God grant you may return in safety, and not have become a partner either with the bad men who govern, or the unhappy ones who suffer."

"I confess," he said, "that I should much like to be acquainted with the leaders in this great change."

"And for this," she replied in a tone

of melancholy reproach, "you are giving up country, friends, and the prospects of your future life."

"No, Isabel," he rejoined, "do not fancy that I have no visions of private English happiness. I feel no desire so strongly as that of devoting myself heart and soul to one bright, beloved object. Can you think me so insensible, so degraded, as not to long for the union of my whole being with another and a better than my own? Do you imagine that my heart has no capacity for love? You do not know me, — Isabel, you tremble, you will fall; let me support you."

"No, no," she faltered, "it is nothing. I — I — you need not hold me, — I can stand." And as she said it she sank on a seat.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed her cousin,  
“are you ill?”

“Leave me,” she answered, “I entreat you, leave me. You ought not, you shall not speak to me as you did. Arthur, I am no fit confidant for you.”

“I have indeed nearly said too much,” replied the young democrat: “Isabel, I can love deeply, exclusively, religiously. But if I knew that the woman I adored, gentle and beautiful, possessed of a thousand talents, and crowned with the dignity of goodness, returned my affection by a love as earnest and profound as mine,—if I had this ambrosial chalice at this moment in my power, I should be compelled to fly from the blessing.”

Panting and wan, she had not strength to speak, and he proceeded:—“Before

me is an attempt which may change the condition of mankind. I am constrained by an acknowledged duty and a recorded oath: I am aiming at a great end; but, alas! through how much difficulty and sorrow must I struggle to attain it. I must not clog myself by individual affections; nor would I subject the lovely and admirable being I have imagined to the fears that would needs haunt her in my path, to the tarnish that might soil even her brightness."

Isabel rose firmly from her seat, fixed upon Arthur her eyes, which had hitherto been cast down, and with her hands clasped, and drawn closely in upon her bosom, replied thus: "And if such a woman as you have described, or one immeasurably weaker and more erring, were so spoken to by the man she loved,

how, Arthur, would she answer? Would she not say, that she had indeed hidden and treasured her attachment within her heart till it was twisted up with the very roots of her existence; yet it concerned only the man whom she had known high-minded, honourable, a lover of his country, and of whatever is true and beautiful, and just, and benevolent; that it was a gem hoarded too long, and of too great price, to be thrown away on a conspirator, a traitor, one who, as it appears, will adopt any means, however criminal, of attaining his visionary object? She would say this, because, did she love so intensely as you supposed, she would have an energy of feeling powerful enough to support her principles as well as her affections, and to give her conscience the victory over all that might be weak and misdirected in her heart."



As Isabel said these words she walked towards the door-way, close to which Arthur was standing. They saw each other's faces more clearly than before ; her's was pale and fixed ; his flushed and agitated. She had scarcely gone a step beyond him when he moved to her side, suddenly took her hand, and while trembling and irresolute she glanced at him for a moment, and then fixed her eyes upon the ground, exclaimed, " Isabel, this is wild injustice on your part, and doating folly on mine. God alone foresees certainly to what fate I am destined, whether to one that may separate me for ever from all I love the most devoutly, to disgrace, to poverty, to exile, to the dungeon, or the gibbet ; or, perhaps, to a success which will cut me off as effectually from the sympathies I hold most precious.

At all events, and for all events I am prepared, I would not have you leave me in causeless bitterness. Wherefore should you pronounce thus harshly with regard to conduct, of which you know neither the ends nor the reasons, and which all your previous habits of mind tend to prevent you from judging fairly? Ought you so readily to believe that I am a madman or a villain, without attempting to place yourself in my position, and to look around you with my convictions and purposes? When we read, walked, spoke, thought together, when we were familiar friends, you would not have estimated so hardly even the most utter stranger that crossed your path. Shall the time which has wrought so complete a change in my political opinions erase from your mind the memory of all

those hours when the weapons of our quarrels were smiles and jests, and your severest accents were a song?—Do you remember the morning when I frightened you by climbing the old yew tree, and you began to weep at my fancied danger? I heard your sobs, and let myself fall from the highest branch upon the ground in my haste to console you. You laughed through your tears when I took you in my arms, and—and—and, I believe, Isabel, our lips met.”

She blushed crimson, and exclaimed, hastily, “We were children then, Arthur. But it is not I who would now efface the records of those happy hours; it is you, who are about to cover with blots of shame and terror whatever is honourable or delightful in the memory of your past life. If your hand be made red with

blood, not all the tears of my miserable affection will be able to wash away the stain."

"A woman does not," he replied, "and need not judge save by rules of fire-side prudence and morality. What are the statutes and institutions you blame me for opposing but pretended means towards the happiness of the people? It is for the happiness of the people that I too struggle; and when the law of God and conscience bid me rescue the world from all the tyrannies that are looked on by the sun, what is the law of man that shall have the evil power to interrupt me? There exists not that force in the breath of men's mouths, or in the writings of any earthly pen, to restrain the liberators of their race. I see mankind debarred from the

exercise of the rights to which they are born, ignorant because instruction is withheld from them, vicious because they are encompassed by false and corrupting interests, enslaved by reverence for the most contemptible men and functions, and habituated to despise whatever is honourable and precious; and where is the principle or enactment created for bad ends by these detestable means, of authority to compel my submission? I, too, would fain groan aloud to God for the ordination which has made all I believe and hope as a social being, incompatible with all that is dearest to me as an individual,—dearer perhaps, Isabel, than even to you.”

“Arthur,” she replied, “I will not dispute with you. Our conversation has lasted too long already. I am

weak and miserably foolish in saying any more than I have now said; hear me but for a moment. You have taken up a mere vague opinion about politics, which would have past through your mind and been recalled no more, but that the troubled state of the world gives you a chance of being able to act upon it boldly, splendidly, and at once. Therefore, in support of a doctrine which you scarcely believed yesterday, and will assuredly reject to-morrow, you are rushing on a path of action which never can be retrodden; and are about to perform deeds the memory of which will so cling to your conscience, that years of humble virtue could not enable you to shake it off. Believe what extravagance you will of the natural excellence of mankind; refer, if you please,

all the good on earth directly to individual men, and all the evil to institutions; but you will experience long and deep remorse if you make your present fancies the rules of your conduct. You cannot be working exclusively for good, and by good instruments, when you are planning so much immediate violence and wretchedness, when you are cherishing in your own mind, and attempting to communicate to others, so much of hatred, scorn, and turbulence."

"Alas!" he answered with a sigh, "you can say nothing as to the imperfection, the worthlessness, of my character, which would exceed my own consciousness of how little I merit the esteem — the love of any one. But vile as I may be, should I not be immeasurably baser, if with one intimate

and overpowering belief, I failed to act upon it ? ”

“ There is no one,” she said, “ less inclined than I am to think you vile, or worthless. Imprudent, misguided, fearfully, almost madly, erring, I believe you. Do you know me so little as to fancy that if I thought you consciously and irretrievably wrong, I could speak to you as I have spoken this evening ? God forbid ! But at every step you take, the chasm widens behind you, and divides you more and more from those who have hitherto been attached to you. This is, perhaps, of less consequence ; your friends may shudder and weep in secret over the fall of one whom they had—had—loved—and honoured ; and in the meanwhile new friends may be to you all that they were. But the



quiet heart, the honest hope, the sustaining self-respect will be gone for ever, when the phantom picture, bright with wisdom, heroism, and glory, on which you now gaze, shall fade away, and leave only a mirror, coldly and severely true, to reflect the image of yourself haggard with remorse, and foul with infamy."

Involuntarily he lifted his hands to his face, as if to shut out the vision she had raised. At the same time she changed her position in order to re-enter the house, but had scarcely moved forward a step, when she again turned towards him, and with a quivering countenance, to which the blood now rushed like an inundation, faltered forth, through thickly-coming sobs, "Arthur, we must not part thus!" and held out her hand to him.

He took it, and pressed it to his heart, and at the same moment she burst into tears, and her head drooped upon his shoulder. He too, the fierce conspirator, was now subdued by gushing sorrow.

Isabel was the first to recover her self-possession ; and though she did not for a minute withdraw herself from his arms, she raised her head, and murmured " Arthur, this is childish weakness."

Giving utterance to the passion of their young hearts, he answered, " What moments like these could wisdom have bestowed on us ? Yet, my beloved Isabel, it is indeed my task to be wise for both. Nature and affection have claimed their own. Alas ! that duty should ever be inconsistent with them. My oath is binding still. Nay more, for it would be worse than folly to deceive you ;

to-morrow morning I set out for London. A few days more will place me on the continent, and onward from that time all is cloud and confusion."

She looked at him mournfully for a few seconds, and exclaimed, "Arthur, I pity, far more than pity you. Why do you force me to entertain any other feeling than unmixed esteem and confiding"—she paused for a moment, and as she turned away, pronounced faintly, "love!"

## CHAPTER VII.

At the time appointed for the meeting of which Osborne had given notice, he walked rapidly from his rooms in the Temple, towards the spot where the Reformers were to assemble. The dim lamps were lighted in the streets; and all that a London evening produces of strange, busy, and disgusting, was abroad and moving about him. The compound noises and shadowy sights disturbed him, and he hastened on until he reached an obscure street, close to the haunt of his

associates. He then paused. All was still. The lines of outhouses, stables, and hovels, looked blank and dead ; and only an instructed eye could have turned with searching anxiety to a dark window, a cranny of which was left uncovered by the imperfect shutter, and permitted the escape of one twinkling ray. On that faint gleam the soul of Osborne hung, as if it were the potent planet swaying his deadliest enemy to death.

He looked off to the sullen moon, and sentinel stars ; but still his eye recurred to that thin and tremulous glimmer, which spoke to him of conspiracy and death, and of the treachery by which at that moment he was bringing ruin on his friends. He turned his back, and walked away ; but the attempt at indifference was unsuccessful, and again he slunk into

the blackness of a gateway, from which he could watch that solitary candle.

He gazed and listened; sharpening, and, as it were, refining his senses, to detect the first indication of the occurrences which were about to arise from his faithlessness, or the slightest sounds of what might be transacting within. Nothing reached his ear but the distant cry of the watchman. His pulse beat quickly and fiercely, in his alternate anxiety to catch the coming tread of men, or some whisper of the secret proceedings in part the children of his own counsels. Was it possible that the information would not be acted on, or had the plotters been warned, and refrained from attending?

In the midst of these thoughts his ear suddenly caught a distant noise; and he leaned against the wall at one side of the

gateway, and attempted to collect the import of the sound. It approached, and he speedily became sure that it was unconnected with the subject of his reflections. A creeping hackney coach passed through the street; and the slow, long-heard rumbling of a vehicle not associated in any way with the business which filled his mind, seemed to his feelings something horrible, and almost supernatural.

It occurred to him that he might possibly be able to gain a position more favourable for observation, and less liable to discovery. After cautious research he found a dark lane which conducted him to some broken ground behind the line of buildings, on one of which his mind was so intensely concentrated. Here, and still as much as possible in the shade, he placed himself; and succeeded

in distinguishing the broken tones of conversation, the modulated flow of oratory, the sounds that accompany the various formalities of discussion, and the occasional murmurs of half-stifled applause. He even persuaded himself that he recognized the voice of Coningsby in a speech which lasted for some minutes, and which was followed by a general and continued hum of approbation.

But through, and, as it were, under these noises, he now detected other fainter but more regular sounds. He started : it could be, it was nothing but the approach of a considerable body of men. In every pause of the voices the tread appeared to be louder and more distinct. Soldiers were at hand. He guessed that they were seizing both ends of the street, so as to prevent all escape ; and he thought he could hear the whis-



pered commands of the officers. By and by there was a knocking at the entrance of the house in question, then a sudden tumult within, and then silence, interrupted by the crash of the door.

Osborne could distinguish nothing more, until from a window high above the ground, a man jumped down beside him and instantly ran away. Another followed, and another; and from the black corner in which he stood he counted eight persons who thus escaped. The ninth fell as he reached the soil; and before he could rise Osborne had seized him, for he had seen his face, and knew it to be Coningsby's. Arthur, however, recovered his consciousness and his strength, when he felt the grasp which detained him; and with ready and skilful energy shook himself free and rose to his feet.

He looked at his antagonist, and with an expression of amazement in his countenance, which changed to disgust and defiance, the most important of Osborne's intended victims moved rapidly past him, and was soon lost in the obscurity. He was not completely hidden before two or three musket shots had been fired at him from the window, a visitation from which the informer was saved by standing close to the wall.

He gazed after the fugitive with ferocious anxiety, but could not discover that any injury had been done by the balls; and then sought to retire as swiftly and secretly as possible from the neighbourhood of a spot where, chiefly by his means, so strange a drama had been performed. The reflection that he had been saved, by his timely treachery, from

those evils which had fallen on his fellow-conspirators was, even to his base and sophistical spirit, a poor compensation for self-contempt and the consciousness of infamy.

When Coningsby had escaped from the building, which constables and officers now held possession of, and also had shaken himself free from the grasp of his letter-writing friend, he walked hastily over a considerable extent of broken ground, and again reached the streets. He did not waste much time in deliberation as to the course he should next pursue; but hurried onwards with a speed arising in a much greater degree from the tumult of his mind than from any distinct notion of an imminent peril to be avoided.

In truth, he was far more deeply and bitterly occupied by reflections on the

villainy of Osborne, the man whom he had long believed his friend, and in whom he had trusted as an unshrinking champion of their common cause, than by remembrance of the occurrences which had destroyed the conspiracy and endangered himself.

The moral downfall of one whom he had supposed an enthusiast, seemed to pierce the very heart of his hopes. It struck with sudden annihilation an intimate and precious portion of his existence. All that he had believed to be most assured and steadfast, wavered. He felt his war-horse staggering beneath him: he saw his idol totter on its pedestal.

In comparison with this misery, the accident which had imprisoned or scattered his associates, made of him a lurking wanderer, and disappointed his most

cherished aspirations, shrank away into a grain of dust. It was the operation of an evil principle which he had always been aware of, and in no degree interfered with his belief, or affected his determination. But the discovery of Osborne's worthlessness tended to make him pause in a career which for years he had been running. The one misfortune proceeded from an hostility which he was prepared to encounter; the other was from treachery in the very army on which he had relied.

Such was Coningsby's state of mind while he pursued his way through a wilderness of humble streets, and across a few glimmering fields, until he found himself on a small eminence to the north of London. Little of the city was distinguishable except as a dusky mass: but some scattered steeples, and the heaven-

displacing dome of St. Paul's, were faintly visible, and gave dim features, and a slumberous expression to the prospect. He was weary and exhausted, and sat down on a low stone from which he could observe whatever the darkness permitted to be seen.

Where were now his gorgeous expectations,—birds of Paradise which could live only on the wing, and of which the feathers had been so rudely clipt? The splendid cloud was turned to a thin mist and drizzling shower: the panoply of war to a children's pageant: for the stately and living tree remained but a handful of ashes; its leaves were drifted into the caverns of the autumn; and the worm was in the kernel of its fruitage.

Arthur turned away from his defeated hopes; and left a region which still trembled

with the earthquake. He forced himself to look without rather than within; and fixed his eyes upon the shadowy world of life, and wealth, and power, which lay before him. "Here, then, I am," thought he, "a fugitive on the outskirts of London; a bubble on the shore of that great ocean, and perhaps, about to burst and be dissolved for ever. Yet the human bubble, till it breaks, has at least the pleasure of contemplating the billows it belonged to.

"How vast and strange a caravanserai, where the guests are paid as well as lodged, and only the attendants receive nothing! How curious and complicated a hive, where the drones are alone permitted to eat the honey! Yet after all, how ill am I assured that human nature has not, on the whole, done in all circumstances the best it could! Is

it not possible that society receives its direction from the only principle that can govern it, the forces, namely, that exist within itself; that these alternately compromise, predominate, and disappear, according to the inalterable law of their relative importance; and that to attempt suddenly to change or subdue their influence by my own will, may lead to confusion and sorrow? Can the breath of my mouth be of power to transmute the whole spirit, and modify all the forms in that enormous body of ill compacted existence? The attempt," he concluded, "is at least glorious, and may perhaps be successful:" and with this he endeavoured to console himself.

But the mass before him of that which was actual and subsisting, oppressed his thoughts; and this feeling as much per-



haps as the consideration of his personal security, urged him to leave the neighbourhood of the metropolis. He determined that he would endeavour to reach the Continent; and visit, in his way to the coast, an early friend, whose residence lay near the road he was about to travel.

His heart was stirred with gentler feelings than any in which he had indulged since his parting from Isabel, while he entered the village of Hamnor, some eight hours' journey from London. The noon of a summer-day had passed when he reached the first cottages on the verge of the hill, and saw the scattered handful of quiet homes, which spread down the descent, with a large barn or two on the flanks, and a spire at the lower extremity. The hill-side was rich

with cottages, gardens, and orchards, in every one of which fruits had been frequently given to him; and making an angle with the line of the village road, a brook ran past the church below,—the brook in which he had so often bathed. Far in the green expanse of country beyond the village, he could distinguish the market town of which he had gloried in the annual fair. On a knoll to his right hand, half-encircled by the river, stood an ancient tower, cleft as if by the sword of one of the giants, and rising black and definite in the bright air. To the left, extended the wood, in which he had wandered whole summer days; and at no great distance before him was the grey and shining sea.

Even the white clouds, hanging high and loose in the sunshine, seemed familiar

to him: and when he had embraced the whole prospect, and dwelt on the faintest lines of the horizon, he returned with hastier eagerness, to the centre and heart of all,—the Rectory, in which he had spent so many years of his boyhood. There he expected to find his friend, and thence came flitting around him the spirits of former years, garlanded with blossoms, and looking into his soul with a gaze of pensive and purifying recognition.

While he was looking at the chimneys of the Parsonage, and the elms that surrounded it, he thought of his old tutor, till the tears were gathering at his eyes. Dr. Wilmot had died two years before, and it was three since Arthur had seen him. That kind and humorous manner rose vividly to his memory, and

he recollected with much of affection and of sorrow, the look and tones of the good Clergyman among his books, in his workshop, in the fields, and in the pulpit.

He had delighted in Greek and Latin literature, and in our old and hearty English books. The boys had often revelled by his side in the little room, which, with its lathe and tools, and mechanical contrivances, was to the Rector, a kingdom of especial glory. He had taught them more in the meadows and woods than in his study, and the voices of the brooks often filled up the pauses in his instruction. It may even be affirmed with the most entire truth, that his pupils had always been eager to hear his Sunday preaching; for they perceived no chasm between it and the man whom they knew and loved at home. They

felt, as did every one who heard him, that the Sermon was no collection of general propositions put together from books, but the expression of all the goodness in a good man's personal consciousness, the true prolongation and utterance of his daily life.

With the image of the father, that of the son was united in Arthur's mind; and when he had walked down half of the descent he moved onward more lightly, as he thought of meeting with his friend, Harry Wilmot. They had been at different Universities; their correspondence had not been very active; and Arthur had not seen him since his father's death. In the mean time, Harry had taken orders, and a wife; and had obtained the pinnacle of his ambition,—the Living which had been held by his father.

There were but few changes in the outward appearance of the antique house to indicate that it was the dwelling of a bridegroom; and Arthur fancied that he perceived something of reverent regard for every trace and token of the former owner. When he knocked at the door, a maid-servant, with a new and a comely face, admitted him. But in a moment after, the old housekeeper ran to meet him, and seemed inclined, at first, to fall upon his neck and kiss Master Arthur; when, however, she observed the astonishment of the handmaid at her exuberant joy, she coloured to her cap, and dropped a low curtsey, which lost, indeed, something of its downward dignity, from the eagerness with which he shook her by the hand. In another instant she had preceded him into the well-known

study, and announced his arrival in a voice which quivered with emotion, and every tone of which was as musical to his heart as the murmur of a hive to the forest foundling, whose infancy the bees had nourished.

Harry Wilmot was seated beside an open window, with a brown folio before him, and a young and graceful woman, with her work in her hand, was placed at the other side of the little table. For some seconds the friends saw nothing but each other, until Harry turned and presented Arthur to his wife, who looked pretty, gentle, and happy.

“How changed she is,” thought the visitor,—and it was a necessary, though not a very profound, reflection,—“from the child for whom I remember to have made cowslip - balls, and nosegays of

primrose and violet!" In five minutes he felt himself at home, and only started at intervals instead of every moment, from the effect of those friendly and remembered voices on his heart.

The young clergyman led the conversation to the subject of the deceased rector; and Emma Wilmot, who had risen to leave the room, was so much interested, that unconsciously she again sat down and listened, and sometimes joined for an instant in a dialogue about the old man, whom she had revered in his life, and who had himself rejoiced to know she would become the bride of his son.

A hundred anecdotes were told or alluded to of his wit, his kindness, his confidence in God, and his distrust of himself. The flowers, bushes, and grass-



plot which they saw and smelt through the open window, had been cultivated by him, and were green and redolent with his memory. The volumes which surrounded the room, and which he had collected and used, breathed out unnumbered meanings, more exquisite and grave than any put into them by their authors. They had in them a virtue above all book-knowledge, because they were slight side-helps to the comprehension of that better book, his mind; on which the thoughts of all men who knew him were daily writing encomiastic comments and notes of admiration, and of which the "FINIS" was wetted by the tears of hundreds of humble learners.

From the rector they turned to talk of his parishioners; and Arthur heard of many perplexing changes in the affairs of

the rustic acquaintances and friends whom he had lost sight of for several years. One cottager had found a hoard of old coins, and had been ruined by the spendthrift habits which he acquired with his wealth. Another had been hired by a showman, to play the part of an Indian savage, and in undergoing what should have been a temporary transmutation, was dyed irrecoverably red. A farmer, a notorious miser, who always bitterly complained, because he was only allowed to cheat the rector out of half the tithe of his farm, had died extremely rich, leaving his money to an hospital; nor had the deceased Dr. Wilmot been able to persuade him on his death-bed to provide for his orphan grand-daughter, the girl, by the way, who opened the door for Arthur. The schoolmaster had addicted

himself to the study of astrology, and foretold by the stars that the daughter of another farmer would accept him as a husband; but the bailiff on a neighbouring estate had exerted a stronger influence over the damsel than the constellations, and the schoolmaster had burned his books, and devoted himself exclusively to palmistry, by the help of the ferule. To this catalogue of memorable events must be added deaths, and marriages, and their consequences; the increasing culture of turnips; and the casual appearance in the village, some months before, of a Methodist preacher.

“A prompter of schism,” observed Harry Wilmot, “who, I am happy to say, was signally discomfited by the affection of my people for the church. The measures which I thought it right to

pursue, both in the pulpit and otherwise, in defence of the Establishment, though I believe sufficiently energetic, were not considered by my diocesan—I have a letter from his secretary, which I will shew you—to exhibit any predominance of zeal over discretion.”

Arthur afterwards learned that the chief instruments in the disgrace and defeat of the unhappy Wesleyan, had been plenteous applications of eggs and mire by the younger parishioners of Hamnor: though, as ought in justice to be recorded, Harry had unquestionably preached three sermons on the subject, two before, and one after the catastrophe; the last of which he ended by an exhortation to observe Christian charity in our behaviour, even towards those who would trouble the peace of Israel.

For a moment Arthur felt inclined to smile at the humble vanity of his unworldly friend. But the entire simplicity and benevolence of the young rector overmastered this tendency. "I am sure," said the wife, blushing and looking down, "the people are so much attached to you, that if you had merely requested them not to listen to the Methodist, without preaching against him at all, he would not have been able to gather an audience in the parish."

In the evening they walked in the fields, through the green paths of a copse, and along the hedge-rows which bounded golden lakes of ripening corn, where the partridges started up, and flew across the horizontal sunlight. After they had returned, Wilmot took the arm of his friend, and led him to his father's grave.

They were silent for some moments, when the clergyman said, in a subdued voice, "I think of this stone as of the seal on his patent of nobility. He lies beside my mother, and nothing now can divide them. I have sometimes been tempted to wish that my dust also were mixed with theirs. I trust we may be forgiven for reflecting, that while we live, there is no possible warrant against the misery of seeing those we love unfaithful to us, or to their consciences ; against a thousand pangs, which are grievous to be borne, though the christian will be aided in bearing them ; and above all, we are for ever insecure against our own lapse, a peril which shook the mind of an apostle. I have wept much over this grave ; but I feel that I have no longer any excuse for lamentation, which would be as evil an

interruption of resigned tranquillity as a storm, with all its tumultuous agonies, amid this translucent evening and love-like calm. The temper and affection of my father are breathing in this bright and serene air; and, Arthur, even your presence, which recalls more distinctly so many moments of our intercourse with him, can, I thank God! no longer move me to that headlong and desperate grief, which deformed the first weeks of my bereavement.

“ Yet, Arthur, do not forget him; on his death-bed he did not forget you, and he spoke of you in some of his last words. He had often, in the latter months of his life, addressed me urgently on some subjects which you must remember his habit of conversing about when you knew him; but he never, in earlier years, was so im-

pressive as afterwards in his remarks on the danger of following any rule, but that which is written in the heart, and reproduced and strengthened, for those who read diligently, in every page of the Bible. He was accustomed to say that the use of any other standard than conscience, the doing any thing, or fostering any state of feeling but with reference to this, though it be in support of what may seem the widest and most certain good, is to every man sure and swift destruction. In thus acting I should not only do wrong, but I should be sure that I could not thereby possibly accomplish any good for others. Distrust, he said, above all things, those means of perversion so common in every intellectual age, and above all, in ours, theories of good which hide, under conclusions of the understanding, the



vilest treason against the moral being. Let nothing persuade you that others can be made better by your becoming a worse man. O! rather bow with reverence to the laws of duty recorded on your heart; seek to extend their dominion over yourself, and to exalt their sanction, and use your jealous and keen-eyed vigilance only in estimating, according to their most rigid scale, whatever concerns peculiarly your personal character. Not founded upon them, any scheme of social improvement must be false and pernicious; and how infinitely more ineffectual then, is the attempt to realize any theory founded on them, while, at the very moment, we neglect what they require from ourselves as individuals. On his death-bed, Arthur, he applied these considerations to propensities of

your intellect, which he told me he had often reflected on with the most serious apprehension. ‘Tell my dear Arthur,’ these were his expressions, ‘that I entreat him to distrust his understanding, and to cherish his conscience, and above all, not to let his benevolence and his love for putting in practice his general theories, turn away his attention for a moment from the state of feeling in which those designs grow up, and which they will assuredly perpetuate. Let him remember also, when the enthusiasm of youth is passed, not to be discontented with the gentler succeeding impulse; nor think, when he gazes on the sunset, that the light of the world is expiring, but consider that it is the same luminary which shines on him from the disk of the rising moon.’”

They returned in silence to the rectory.

The moist and gleaming air in which they were steeped, was purified for Arthur as if by the presence of the deceased teacher; and he felt it gently filling him with the freshness of a new being. The excitement of his previous mind passed away; and this serene satisfaction was prolonged into the night by the conversation of Emma, which visited him with the sweetness of his earliest emotions, and brought before him the rainbows, and the laughing streams, and the glad verdure of the world, which had rejoiced his childhood.

He spoke to the young wife, of a morning, many summers past, when he had been wandering along a lane in the neighbourhood of Hamnor, and had been roused from his listless mood by the sound of childish glee. "I pushed my way," he said, "through the flowery

bushes, and saw you lying in a corner of the field, while your attendant was at the other side of it. You were moving as softly as a summer wave, and humming to yourself, as if you had been only singing a continuous inarticulate tune, broken every now and then by a gush of laughter, while you pulled a glistening buttercup, or saw some small bird glancing in the hedge."

The husband smiled in delight upon his wife; and when she had retired and left the friends together, it seemed to Arthur that the star of the evening was quenched, and Wilmot could not refrain from talking of her for an hour. Shifting fancies and wild emotions had all been assimilated by his love and wedlock into a steady and integral portion of his nature; as the vague sand-bank weltering at the

will of gales and waters, and on which nothing of more stable reality can rest, than some bright storm vision, may be fixed into a cape of solid earth, supported by rocks of coral, and covered with gardens and forests, peopled with the creatures of paradise.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE thoughts which had been subdued or exalted for a time, by the recollection of the late rector, and by the gentle presence of his daughter-in-law, soon began again to agitate Arthur. Through innumerable struggles to win a resting-place for his mind, he had at last attained to definite political opinions; but how fierce a war was gathering within and around the fortress to which he had betaken himself!

Every object of the external world, all knowledge and strength, the history of

man's collective power, and the achievements of individual humanity, nay, human nature itself, appeared to him but as accessories to his scheme of reform ; and as he conceived himself to exist for this alone, for it only did he feel that there was any meaning in the existence of the universe. His remembrances, his hopes, his convictions, and his new distrust of himself and of his cause, shook his frame, and weighed upon his tongue, and his face was darkened as if the smoke of the fire which was consuming a martyr were seen to gather its blackness round his brow.

After a silence of some minutes, during which his friend observed his countenance with watchful and affectionate eyes, the fugitive exclaimed, "No; I may be baffled, despised, lost; but I never will desert the

hope of giving freedom and happiness to mankind!"

"Are you then, indeed," replied Wilmot, with mournful accents, "are you indeed bent upon designs so fatal? I fear my father's words will prove but too prophetic."

Arthur's answer was an animated defence of his opinions, which he concluded by a statement of the position in which he was then placed. Wilmot, after assuring him of his best assistance in forwarding his escape, proceeded to reason with him on the subject of those schemes which had encircled him with difficulty and disgrace.

The reformer exhibited no relaxation of his previous confidence, though his expressions were coloured with a melancholy, which they had not usually worn



before the defeat of the conspiracy. "What," he said, "shall I see the means of liberating the world, and, from any miserable personal considerations, refuse to avail myself of them? Come poverty, come exile, come shame, come death,—I am prepared for all. But I am not prepared for the desertion of the cause to which I have bound myself, and in which is involved the whole futurity of the world. I read in all the pages of all history, that wherever man is left to the free development of his own energies, then he is generous, erect, happy. I find around me, even in the most improved nations of the earth, restrictions and barriers without pretext or authority; and I see the mass of evil which results from them. The lessons of experience are confirmed and exalted by the evidence of that natural

reason which tells us that men are not born unequal. Am I, then, weak, or mad, or blame-worthy, for attempting to redress the wrongs that surround and disgust me?"

"I will say no more," replied Wilmot, "on the political question than this, that every man has in his mind the seeds of the great ideas of knowledge, law, and religion; that, in proportion as these are developed, he is free, virtuous, happy; and that unless these are maintained and kept before our eyes by permanent institutions, and unless property be secured, no nation can exist—assuredly none has existed—otherwise than as barbarians or savages, among whom no one can acquire so high a moral development, or be possessed of so many of the instruments of civilization, as the meanest peasant in

England. I may, therefore, just as well assert that all experience is on my side of the question, as you affirm that it is on yours. But I had rather discuss the matter with reference to yourself. I will ask you, my dear Arthur, whether your personal feelings do not demolish the very foundations of your political doctrine? You, whose situation in life has exempted you from suffering,—until you went out of your way to court persecution,—by the disabilities, inequalities, what you will, of actual society, have you, on the whole, been happy since you left Hamnor? Have you been rendered miserable by political systems; or have you not been, in yourself, fickle, passionate, and discontented, and have therefore looked round you to find beyond your own breast something to which you might

attribute, and on which wreak your dissatisfaction? If, then, you know, and you cannot but know, that the drawbacks from your own happiness have not been caused by any external circumstances, but by an inward condition of disease, what title have you to assume that this is not also the case with other men? Have you ever considered with how small a portion of wealth and outward enjoyment a man may be free, and happy, and high-minded? The naked and half-starved savage is miserable, not because he is ill supplied with food and clothes, but because he wants that moral culture which displays itself in large and strongly built national institutions, in the richest possessions and most complicated organization of society, in augmented opulence and refined arts; these not being first

causes, but at once signs and intermediate agents of national good. So that, as neither your welfare, nor the welfare of any man arises from your position, or his, you can have no sufficient ground for making a change in that position, either for yourself or others, the main purpose of your existence."

"Can there be any mode of self-improvement so efficacious as exertion for the benefit of others?" was the response of Arthur.

"In some states of mind," said Wilmot, "certainly none. But again I refer to yourself. I do not doubt that you have devoted yourself to what you believed the real interests of mankind with the utmost sincerity and ardour. Are you happier or better than when you went to college? Is your mind calmer, clearer, firmer; or

have you not been cherishing a spirit of jealousy and turbulence, and a whole troop of evil passions? If you will permit those depths of the heart to settle and become transparent which are ordinarily so disturbed, and will steadily fix upon them eyes too prone to wander, you will, I am sure, discover that in the attempt to remedy mischiefs not proceeding from the causes you suppose, you have neglected the one great duty, the subjugation, namely, of yourself. Attend to that, and you will thereby become an instrument for the real improvement of others also. While, on your view of the matter, every man is to remain miserable,—for all unnatural and discordant states of mind are misery,—every man is to remain miserable in the attempt to make others happy. Each individual would

thus become the responsible guardian of his neighbour's welfare, and nobody would take care of himself. I am willing, Arthur, to rest the matter on this; if you assert that you are now happy, or that you were so a week ago,—though it is a strange happiness for a philosopher, which depends upon the warrant of a minister and the staff of a constable,—if you feel that you are in a serene and stable temper, neither repining nor elated, nor desperate, nor frantic, nor tending to be in any of these moods; if you are rejoiced in thinking of the years which you have passed since we dwelled together, and not agitated by the present, nor puffed up by the future, then I say, in God's name go on as you have begun; and if you had told me that you had bartered your soul to the devil, I should scarcely bid you

turn back ; for the seeming fiend who so deals with his customers, must needs be a good angel in disguise. Now, good night. In the morning we will take counsel for your safe departure from England. Remember we breakfast at nine."

The mind of Arthur was in a very different state from that which his friend had just described. He sat down in his chamber, and toiled again and again round the same fiery circle. The church clock, for the second time after his parting from Wilmot, struck the hour, and he did not hear it. When at last, in physical exhaustion from continuance of the same posture, he withdrew the hands which covered his face, and saw himself imaged in a mirror, he started as if he had seen a ghost ; and his next thought was, that he must in truth have become insane, and



that he was looking on the reflection of his own mania.

He opened his window, and drank the night air, and bathed in it. The silent landscape and tranquil heavens laid themselves like a web of dewy gossamer on his heart. The moon had set, but the stars were shining brilliantly. He looked and looked again ; and he drew a freer breath when he became thoroughly conscious of the steadfast lines of the prospect, the black hollows, and dusky hedge-rows ; and he blessed God when he found that he could distinctly watch and count the momentary twinklings of the stars. Yet his brain was in a strange whirl ; he felt imprisoned by the walls of the chamber ; the realms of his boyhood were before him ; and he leaped from the window to the ground.

He traversed the garden, and jumped over the gate which divided it from the fields. The whole landscape seemed almost dead, visited by a breeze which it could not feel, its birds all hidden, its flowers closed, its trees yielding to the air only a faint, unwilling murmur, and no sign of wakeful existence but a point of light from the chamber of some melancholy watcher on a distant hill.

He walked without a purpose, not turning aside for any obstacles of the ground, pushing his way through hedges, which scattered a shower of dew upon his face, and fording the brook, which alone, except the sound of his own irregular footsteps, made stir in the solitude. He past beside a farm house in which he had often been when a boy ; but it seemed to him a strange and re-

proachful monument, and he closed his eyes and turned away. He then reached the wood, which he had that day been visiting with Wilmot, but it too repelled him, and the stems of the trees were changed in his thought to living creatures; the branches muttered and waved against him; and a thousand unseen eyes were looking on him through the blackness of the shadows.

He re-entered the village, and in every cottage he saw a familiar but alienated face. Shutters were fastened on the outside of some of the windows, and again he felt that the round holes, distinguishable in the boards by their darker hues, gazed at him like the lidless sockets of animated and monstrous skeletons. He fled for protection to the grave which he had visited in the evening, and he

knelt down on the stone. The spirit of him who had been his friend,—almost his father,—cried aloud against him. It seemed to him that the good dead man beheld him encircled by the mean and brutal countenances of those with whom he had been united; and among them was the pale vileness of Osborne.

Arthur shuddered at these images; but by a desperate effort he restored his mental power, and hastily strengthened himself with those opinions which had gained in his mind almost the value of moral principles, started to his feet, and looked more boldly around him, while his hopes burst through the clouds and blazed upon him in a magnificent vision; England, France, the World, came like a pageant; Hamnor and the church-yard vanished from his con-

sciousness, and the memory of his friend was no longer with him. The man had escaped from the crushing grasp of the boy.

But only a few seconds had elapsed when the church clock sounded the hour of two: that harsh clanging shook the fairy palaces into desolation. Again the night and the cemetery were there, and the many dwellers beneath its sod came armed upon him; and the buried clergyman moved reproachfully his grey head, and raised his withered hand; and the past and the present wrestled against each other for his soul; and his convictions, his misgivings, and his hopes, were blent in stormy battle.

At those two dreary notes alone made audible to his ear, of all the deep continuous measure incessantly chanted by

Time and echoed back by Death, he fled from the church-yard. The houses and trees were glaring on him as he coursed among them; and he uttered the horror of his heart in frantic and but half articulate cries. Thus he held his way through the village, and did not pause till he had gained the summit of the acclivity whereon arose the ruined tower, a portion of the prospect which he had looked at in the previous morning.

He climbed the imperfect stair,—while in his ascent, several of the loose stones fell clattering to the ground,—and mounted to the highest of the three floors. The greater part of the flagged roof was still remaining; and though one of the walls exhibited a wide rent, the narrow chamber was much darker than the glimmering air without. Arthur sank

in a corner, and after a moment of panting and dizziness, was lost in death-like exhaustion.

His dreams prolonged, in some degree, the gloom and contention of his waking mind; but gradually they settled into calm, and the pleasant images of Isabel, and his tutor, of Harry Wilmot, and Emma, alone visited his slumber.

The chill and discomfort of his bodily position were beginning to shape themselves into such painful visions as at first had agonized his sleep, when he was roused by the chirp of birds, and by the gleam of day upon his eyes. He started up, and looked around him, and the numbness left his limbs.

The twilight was faintly brightening in his ruined chamber, and he looked through the rough gap, which had been

left by the fall of more than half the masonry from one of the sides. Nothing was here visible but the cold and uncertain prospect, and a slight reflection of day-break on the horizon. Through a small loop-hole in the opposite wall one glittering beam was slanting upwards to the roof, and his heart freshened at the light of the sun. He clambered up one side of the rent, hanging in peril over the sheer precipice, which was terminated by the dark surface of the stream. A few moments' exertion enabled him to reach the summit, which was a small platform, the remaining portion of the roof. The interstices between the broad stones had furnished a hold for innumerable weeds; and in the corners and under the ledges of the broken battlements many swallows had made their nests.



He leaned against an angle of the wasted parapet and looked around. The sky was for the most part dim, and the stars were few and pale. The inequalities of the ground were but indistinctly visible under the mingled gloom and vapour; but in the east was the one point on which the soul of the gazer fixed itself. The light at every moment grew, and showed more clearly the outlines of the clouds by penetrating the blue heavens with its lustre. The forms of things upon our own earth were more defined, and the beams flew, like shoots of molten diamond, along the line of the horizon.

An universe was breathing from the lips of nature, which began to stir with an awakened life. The birds chirped more and more eagerly around, and within the tower, and from all the hedges and

thickets ; and their gushes of music became stronger and more continuous, as if governed by the inner harmony of some mysterious relation to the waxing day. The streams leaped forth from darkness, and their noise was mingled with the gladness of the world, instead of uttering a solitary lamentation. A thousand spirits of joy burst from their caverns ; and even the insect which danced and sparkled in the breeze, seemed elevated by the glory of the hour into an angelic minister. For now the clouds which hung around the orient cradle of the morning were all imbued with the radiance, and absorbed into its sphere, and they gleamed with the hues of the cowslip and the primrose, and all the pale diversities of violet, with spots and borders of crimson. The light was streaming forth as a sea ; and where

it met the mists and shadows, the conflict made a wavering surge of pearl and silver ; and where it flowed around the knolls and trees, which had known before only a spectral existence, they blossomed into living green. Sheep moved along the uplands, and cattle beside the river, and the shrill morning whistle and echoed whooping of the peasant boy, sent loud proclamations of human presence from the far hill-side.

And now the consciousness of all else was lost in gratulation at beholding the brow of heaven's high priest, the sun ; and the first glimpse of his countenance made the triumph of the world. That visage is all eye ; and that eye the source of its own light. In that light all things live, and see themselves watched over by that eye ; and that eye and light are the

type of the only more glorious who made them.

The skies were no longer traversed by separate rays, but were filled with one effulgence ; and instead of a roof of darkness and indistinguishable vapour, feebly dotted by the stars, there was now a dome of blue, with airy skirts and bands of all imperial colours, and a few light cloud-streaks like scattered feathers of a swan. The landscape blazed out, and was transfigured from twilight. Every leaf of the woods and twig among the hedge-rows, each thin small flower in the nook of the meadow, delighted in its portion of morning life. The trees and roofs of the villages reposed on their own cool shadows : the sheaves of oats on the stubble ground stood out as columns of fretted gold, and the white steeple raised

itself in the sunlight, rejoicing to be an emblem of religion for another day. The chimneys of the villages and farm-houses began to smoke ; the ringing of waggons, and the sound of many voices, came from all the lanes and fields ; and the land was covered with the tokens of rustic life, and the cheerful excitement of agriculture.

These things were strange to Arthur. They recalled to him the reality of outward existence, and he was calm and happy. He felt as if the world were a great bright flower, opening to the influence of day, and he a bee hovering over its fragrant petals, or sucking out its inmost honey. The tranquillity of his mind enabled him to reflect more clearly on his position ; and laying aside, for the time, all consideration of political doctrines, he determined that it would be

most advisable to put in practice his former plan, and escape as soon as possible to the coast, and thence to France. But he decided that he would not involve Wilmot either in danger or trouble; and, therefore, wrote a few lines on a slip of paper, and descending from his watch-tower, engaged the first boy he met to convey his note to the rectory. He was well supplied with money, and anticipated but little difficulty in attaining his object.

The need of caution, the variety of persons with whom he was brought in contact, and the invention of expedients of all kinds, prevented him from falling back upon himself. He began to perceive more accurately the difference between mingling with mankind, and looking at them. His activity became readier and more ingenious. Saddened by misfor-

tune, and unconsciously governed by the necessity of his circumstances, he comprehended others better, and thought of himself less constantly than before.

He reached the Continent in safety.

## CHAPTER IX.

FEW situations would more inevitably have produced impatience than that of an inquisitive and eager traveller, on his way to Paris, at the time of Arthur's journey. To him individually a new life was in some sort opening ; and the public affairs which he was about to observe, and perhaps to mingle in, were those on which the eyes of all Europe were at the moment fixed. The pace of the horses which dragged the Diligence seemed to him slower than that of the crawling



worm, while he thought of the struggle which he was soon to witness, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting, and the strange variety of events which had preceded the Revolution, and had marked its course.

When he was weary of reflecting on these subjects, he began to observe his companions. These were three—a young man by his side,—a country girl opposite to him,—and on the same seat with her, and in the corner farthest from Arthur, a middle-aged and well-dressed man. The younger of the male travellers was strikingly handsome, did not appear to be above twenty, and his air and dress were partly military. The other had a look of surly and fretful importance. The girl seemed shrinking and modest. The young man and Arthur began to converse, and

the whole party were soon informed of nearly all that the former could tell them about himself.

His name was Dumond; he had been a few months in the army, and having obtained leave of absence on account of illness, was now nearly recovered, and was on his way to Paris to make interest for promotion before he should rejoin his regiment.

He uttered a few oaths against one of his comrades, who, it seemed, had recently behaved ill in the field, "relictâ," as Dumond observed, "non bene parmulâ." Arthur said something about the claim which his learning would give him, when the other laughed, and answered, "No, no; they have found out at last that learning is all nonsense. I found it out long ago; and my old master would

have made nothing of me but for his niece. Poor Julie! I have never seen a prettier ancle.

“He used to talk to me a great deal about the student’s evening lamp; but I did not find any lamp necessary in my evening walks with little Julie. He did not approve of our studying together; and one summer afternoon, when we were sure he was at vespers, he pounced on us in the garden, with a stick in his hand. I jumped over the wall, and I never saw Julie again.

“So, at seventeen, I was thrown loose on the world. I went to my mother, poor woman! and frightened her into giving me two hundred francs, by swearing I would rob some one if she did not supply me with what I wanted. So I was set up, and I soon made my way

through the country, picking up amusement where I could, till I established myself in the *guingette* of a black-eyed widow ; and a merry life I had of it.

“ All day it was ‘ *trinquons, trinquons, tralalira* ;’ and an old soldier or two, who frequented the house, found that I had a wonderful genius in learning to empty my glass. Fanchon was too good-natured not to let me have my own way ; and a look of mine would always bring out another bottle. When I had spent some six weeks in this manner, I began to be rather tired, especially as Fanchon did not approve of my attentions to her servant girl, and scolded me on the subject pretty regularly. I was sitting one afternoon drinking, among half a dozen jovial fellows ; Fanchon was beside me, and the little servant Jeannette brought us our

wine, and every now and then let me give her a tender pinch while we sang our chorus.

“ I was thus engaged when a guest entered, with his hat pulled over his eyes, sat down near the door, and called for bread and cheese. He did not uncover his head, and kept it bent down towards the table ; but it struck me once or twice that he looked at me out of the corner of his eye. I desired Jeannette to give him some wine, and he took the glass in his hand and said, in a voice which made me start, ‘ I drink to the health of M. François Dumond, and I hope he may never be in worse company than at present.’

“ This put me in a rage, and I jumped up, crossed the room, told him he should not sit there to insult me, and knocked

off his hat. He was my uncle. Fanchon howled, Jeannette wiped her eyes, and I had nothing for it but to look penitent when I was leaving the *Pomme d'Or*.

“That night, however, I again escaped, and, before the next evening, I had joined a troop of actors and mountebanks, who annually astonished almost every village in Normandy, Sir, that is a strange life. Give me a patch-work jerkin, a wooden sword, and dice-box, and not a day shall pass but I will conjure down my throat the best morsel in the farmer's kitchen, and rant myself into favour with his prettiest daughter.”

The facetious and self-satisfied adventurer carried on his narrative in the same strain for a considerable time, and related, with exulting gaiety, one heartless piece of profligacy after another; almost all

leading alike to the misery of those who had confided in him.

During the utterance of his free-spoken history, the person opposite to Dumond had remained with his eyes nearly closed and apparently quite inattentive. The country-girl had for the most part averted her face, as if not wishing to be observed; but Arthur now caught a glance of astonishment and disgust which she could not restrain. He gazed in wonder at her countenance, for it seemed to him that he had seen her before. The large grey eyes, the beautiful and intelligent, though austere features, were familiar to him. But the freckled and sun-burnt complexion, the close plain cap, the coarse dress of dark blue woollen, and the simple handkerchief crossed over the bosom, he could not fancy that he had ever before beheld.

He looked at her intently; and for a moment he thought that her eye was bent on his, as if inquiring whether she was discovered. But at the next instant nothing was discernible, except the calm and indifferent expression which her countenance had previously exhibited. Still he was haunted by a feeling of identity, which escaped from him at every moment, and as often returned.

He considered, however, that if his conjecture should be accurate, it was evident that she wished to remain unrecognized; and, in doubt and confusion, he turned his eyes away. In so doing he perceived that the stranger, who sat next to the maiden, and whom he had heard the *conducteur* call M. Frontin, had been watching his face with a look of cunning inquiry; and he feared that



he had excited suspicions which might be injurious to her. Frontin now fixed his eyes on the countenance of his female neighbour, and Arthur perceived a faint blush pass over her cheek while she was subjected to this resolute inspection.

The Frenchman proceeded to address her ; and though her replies were limited to monosyllables, the familiarity of his conversation increased ; and in a short time, in reply to one of his compliments which was accompanied by an attempt to put his arm round her waist, she frowned fiercely, pushed him away, and desired him to abstain both from addressing and touching her. Dumond laughed aloud ; and she trembled violently, and looked at Arthur with an expression half of recognition, half of supplication ; which he was not slow to interpret and act upon.

He told Frontin that he would turn him out of the vehicle if he presumed again to molest her; and the answer was a torrent of angry denunciations, to the purport that he was sure they were both aristocrats, and that he would soon be revenged. The girl turned pale for a moment; and Arthur told the Frenchman that he might do his worst.

When the evening was closing in, a wheel of the Diligence came off. The *conducteur* was severely bruised; and the passengers, of whom there were one or two in other parts of the carriage besides that which contained Arthur and his companions, escaped as quickly as possible from confinement, and found the postillion freeing the horses.

The *conducteur* could do nothing but groan; the driver said that the nearest

town where a smith to repair the damage could be found, was at a distance of three leagues ; and that the passengers had no resource but to betake themselves to a farm house, of which the light was dimly seen, at the other side of a field, and to wait there while he would mount one of the horses, and seek the necessary assistance. First, however, while Arthur supported the *conducteur*, the driver and some of the others took from the Diligence those articles of the luggage which were at once portable and valuable. Carrying these, and leading the horses, they then set out in a body for the farmhouse.

The night was dark and gusty, and as they turned from the high-road and scrambled on a rough and dubious path towards the light, the wind circled round

them in shrill eddies, or roared along with threatening speed, and groaned and raved among the woods, which were invisible in the distance. The dark fields and plashy byway were full of chill and annoyance ; and when now and then the driving clouds permitted a solitary star to meet the eye, the rack flying fiercely, like a dark sail drenched in wave and tempest, swept again over the gulfs, which but a moment before it had discovered.

Arthur observed that the peasant girl, in whose behalf he had interfered, moved on with stern, uncomplaining resolution ; and declined to accept the support of his arm. But when they were still at a considerable distance from their goal, she stumbled over the stem of a small tree which lay half across the road, and if

he had not suddenly caught her, she must have fallen to the ground. She leaned on him during the rest of their progress to the house, and he felt that she was trembling. Once or twice her eyes turned towards his face in the gloom, with an expression of keen and anxious inquiry, and she seemed to him a person in dread of being detected by one who had known her formerly in some other character. When Frontin happened to approach her, which it was clear he had no intention of doing, she shrank from him with disgust, and in these moments she clung to Arthur with greater confidence than before. He became more and more persuaded that he had seen her under very different circumstances, and in a station far more natural to her than that in which she then appeared.

Their approach was hailed by the barking of a dog, which did not sound as if it promised hospitality. The first part of the building reached by them was a long and high wall, with a large solid gate, and a kind of lodge in the centre, hardly discernible by the rays from a loophole. They knocked at the door, and after they had made several attempts, the light disappeared from the narrow window, and in a few seconds the labourer, who had been superintending the farmer's horses, presented his face at a small hole in the gate, from which he drew back a sliding board, and asked who they were and what they wanted.

They were compelled to repeat over and over their assertion, to state their numbers, and to offer large remuneration for admittance ; and at last the peasant

went away and said he would tell his master.

They examined the building as accurately as the deepening night enabled them ; but they could only discover, at the side which they now faced, a high and strong, but decayed wall ; the little building which was evidently designed as a lodge to guard the gateway, but which seemed to be converted into a stable ; the few chimneys and shattered gables of the other parts of the quadrangular structure, which indicated that it was of considerable extent ; and the tall trees, many of which they could perceive to be felled, and lying on the ground, while others still lifted their black masses into the dusky air. Some stone ornaments were scattered on the earth, and were stumbling-blocks to the travellers. The whole had an

aspect of ruin, which the darkness made uncertain and perplexing; and left a greater degree of desolation to be guessed, than even that which it in truth concealed.

They had waited but a few minutes when the farmer himself appeared, and, after some colloquy, desired to see the papers of the *conducteur*, saying that, in the troubled state of the country, he had much reason to be afraid of robbers. The driver took the documents from the pocket of the groaning man; and, after a few moments allowed for inspection, a narrow door in the gate was opened, and the whole party were admitted into a large and dreary looking court-yard.

The postilion mounted one of his horses, and prepared to ride in search of a smith. But he was detained for a short



time by Frontin, who wrote a few lines, which he desired him to deliver to the *maire* of the town whither he was going. Arthur watched his fellow-traveller closely, and suspected that this note contained an accusation against himself and the young woman whom he had interfered to protect. Any attempt to interrupt the proceedings of Frontin would, however, only increase suspicion; and, conscious that he had but little cause for alarm, he could only hope that there was no more of danger for his companion than for himself.

While the horseman was riding off, and the quick tramp of the hoofs still sounded loudly in the ears of the Englishman, he turned to look at the young woman for whose safety he was alarmed. Her figure intercepted the light of the

lantern held by the farmer; and when Arthur had changed his place, so as to obtain a better view, he saw that her countenance was agitated by various and rapid emotions, while her eyes seemed eagerly to search out every object perceptible around. The other travellers, and the inmates, passed forward to the interior of the building; and she would have been left alone in the darkness had not Arthur addressed her. She started, and moved on; and they entered the room which had received their companions.

It was an apartment of considerable size; the ceiling and cornice were rich with decayed ornaments; the floor was of stone, and a low dull fire took off but little from the dreariness produced by the want of any other furniture than a clumsy table and a few chairs. A smaller

room at one side contained some dishes and kitchen utensils; and a light, which glimmered through its open door, revealed the figure of a female servant employed in the preparation of food. Another door from the outer room was also half open, but nothing, except darkness, was visible beyond.

The farmer seated himself at one side of the fire, and Frontin took possession of a chair opposite to him. One or two others of the passengers also attempted to warm themselves. Dumond went into the domain of the servant, and began to talk with her: and Arthur recommended to the maiden that she should approach the hearth; but she preferred to place herself in a distant corner near the door, which would lead, as it seemed, to the other parts of the building.

## CHAPTER X.

WHEN they had been for nearly an hour in the house, it appeared probable that their hope of obtaining some supper might soon be gratified. A large earthen pot was audibly simmering beside the fire, and the servant was bestirring herself with increased activity, while every now and then, when she could escape the eye of her master, she left some casual morsel in the way of Dumond, who was not slow to avail himself of her bounty. The wind still swept around

the house in melancholy gusts; and the ill humour of the host chilled his visitors.

Suddenly a knocking was heard at the gate. The farmer started up, exclaiming that he supposed here were more travellers come to molest him, and told the ploughman to see what was wanted. But Frontin, with a look of malignant triumph, stole out of the room before him, and was the first to reach the gate. He instantly opened it, and a dozen men rushed in, and seized him.

"Why," he said, "are you not *gendarmes*?" They burst into loud laughter, and immediately tied his arms behind him, and examined his pockets. The man who had followed Frontin ran back in terror to his master, and cried out, "The robbers! the robbers! there are a score of them in the court-yard."

The farmer turned pale and sank on his seat; the maid servant screamed loudly; while Arthur took out of his pocket a pair of small pistols, which he cocked. But the others suddenly snatched one of them from his hands, exclaiming they would all be murdered if he were to make any resistance; and at this moment the noisy approach of the banditti sounded in the passage. In the confusion, Arthur heard a whisper, in English, "knock out the candle, and follow me."

He saw that all hope of resistance was vain, and suddenly flung the candle to the ground, and by the dim light from the fire, pursued the shadowy figure of the girl who had attracted his attention in the *Diligence*, and who now moved quickly through the door near to which she had seated herself.

He had no sooner passed the limit of the outer room than she laid her hand on his arm, and with the other, silently closed the door behind him. She whispered again, and still in English, "Take care not to separate yourself from me," and passed rapidly forward. They were now in complete darkness. The floor was rough with fragments of ruin; and once or twice when he was delayed by stumbling over some of these obstacles, she paused till he could rejoin her. They pursued innumerable narrow windings, and their path, even by day, would have appeared one of considerable difficulty. In some minutes, however, they reached a larger space, and the sky was visible overhead.

A momentary gush of moonlight displayed the shattered and blackened walls

of a gothic edifice, of considerable size. The trees without were discoverable through the rifts in the building, and the tall pointed windows, of which the glories were now lost. Heaps of broken masonry and half-burnt woodwork encumbered the marble floor. Before the brief radiance, which made these things perceptible, had ceased to glitter on the desolate structure, the maiden turned her face towards her companion and said, in his native language, "Mr. Coningsby, do you remember Agatha de Clainville?"

She was indeed that fair and unfortunate nun; and while the heavens shone on her bloodless face, and lighted her deep eyes, he recognized the genuine presence of her whose image had been disturbing him with its resemblance to the humble and silent companion of his journey.



In another moment the clouds concealed the portion of sky in which the moon was sailing. The night was again a mass of shadow and mystery, and the lady became an indistinct phantom, whom he felt, but could not see, to be looking at him.

“Hush!” she exclaimed, and they listened in silence. Distant noises of tumult reached them, by which they knew that the robbers were at their work of plunder. “The sounds,” she said, “do not approach, and we may converse in safety. I am sure I scarcely need warn you that, in whatever circumstances we may be placed, the object which must be of the greatest importance to me is the preservation of my secret. More lives than mine are at stake. For the present you are in greater risk from these banditti

than I, as there is more to be feared and more to be gained from you. But we have still a fair prospect of escape. It is a strange, and perhaps providential accident which has thus again brought me to the place of my vows, to the home of so many years of my past existence. This heap, Mr. Coningsby, these dreary and desecrated ruins, are all that remains of the church in which for the greater part of my life I daily knelt; in which I hoped that my dying supplications would be offered, and the requiem for my soul be sung. When I was borne from this chapel, its carved work was in flames, its pillars were tottering, and my brother lay murdered on the steps of its altar. How long, O Lord! how long?—It was fitly ordained that this polluted house should be the resort of the spoiler, and

that the sacrilegious wretch who made it the abode of his worldly thrift, should himself be overcome by stronger devils than those that possess him."

As she said these words they were startled by a sudden, "Ha!" and by the gleam of a light from a gallery high on the end wall of the chapel, and accessible by a door opening out of another division of the convent. The greater part of this gallery had fallen; but on the small portion which still remained stood one of the robbers, and held a candle, which he stretched as far as he could into the darkness. He evidently had discovered the fugitives, and his exclamation had indicated his success.

Arthur still held one of his pistols; he presented it hastily at the brigand, and in another instant he fell a dead lump on

the stones below, and the light was extinguished. Another voice was heard at the same time to utter a loud curse ; and, knowing that vengeance was at hand, Agatha, although trembling at the deed she had witnessed, told him to grasp her arm and follow her.

A few steps brought them to a corner of the building, where, happily, the floor was not covered with the ruins of the roof. A small door was here open, and, having passed through this, they closed it behind them, and descended a staircase to the vaults. They were then compelled to feel their way through the darkness, and among the clammy coffins. They had scarcely proceeded a few yards when Agatha stumbled, and had not Arthur supported her, would have fallen on her face. She had trodden on human bones ;

and growing faint for a moment, could advance no farther. Soon, however, she whispered, "Let us go on;" but she failed in the attempt, and he was compelled to seat her on a coffin, and leave her there, while he explored the vaults and sought for an outlet.

Even thus she could not sustain herself; and, while her head sank forward, she endeavoured to support her trembling frame by placing her palm on the ground. Again she encountered those decayed tokens of mortality, and the bones of a corpse rattled under her hands. Among them she thought she felt a small cross; she lifted it, and the chain which had suspended it around the neck of the wearer clinked against the fragments of the skeleton. The emblem gave her hope and strength; and though the

agitation of her feelings, and the close atmosphere of the cemetery, checked her breathing, she was enabled to bear up with more energy against the terror of her situation.

This was now increased by the sound of feet and voices, and the ringing of weapons over head. A ray of torch-light came through a crack in the floor of the chapel. Exclamations and curses reached her ears, and she perceived that the robbers were seeking for the slayers of their companion. She closed her eyes to elude the light that dismayed her, and she held her breath for fear the faintest sigh should reach the banditti. Presently the noises dispersed, and, after a short time, she could no longer discover any token of that fearful neighbourhood.

Her thoughts were beginning to recur

to the more visionary alarms natural in her position, when she heard the approach of Arthur. He told her that he had found an opening in the direction she had indicated ; and that, though it was nearly choked with earth and stones, he had succeeded in removing a large part of the obstruction, and in forming a practicable passage. They assisted each other to traverse the vault, and speedily stood before the opening. He pulled down some more of the clay and sods, and, after passing through himself, he aided Agatha to follow him.

But they had scarcely gained a firm footing on the soil, which was now drenched by a violent rain, before they found themselves in the grasp of several hands. The robbers hurried them round the chapel, and conveyed them to the interior of the

building. They were placed in the large room which they had first entered; and here they again met their former companions.

The suffering *conducteur* lay in a corner, and, with closed eyes, leaned his head against the wall. The farmer and his labourer, bound hand and foot, were flung down near the patient. Dumond was tied in a chair, close to the table, with his arms partially free. Behind him, and beside the other captives, Frontin was lying in a constrained attitude, and with his face on the floor, as if to escape observation. The woman servant was moving about, and executing various commands for the preparation of a more abundant supper than had been previously ordered.

She busied herself chiefly at a fire, which was heaped with a pile of wood,



and blazing fiercely, mingled its roar with the noises of the blast and rain without. She was aided in her culinary labours by two or three of the guests, for whom, in haste and terror, she was toiling. Had a painter been there, and could he have looked with no feelings but those of an artist at the group, he would have seen a fitting subject for the united talents of Schalken, Salvator, and Wilkie, in those ruffians who moved amid the red glare of the fire; two of them dark, heavily formed, and clad in faded blue smock-frocks; and the third, a fair and slender youth, with a graceful mien, and a light and sparkling expression, who had thrown aside his upper garment, and was dressed in a fantastic under costume, entirely of crimson. He was also distinguished by a thin and wasted frame, a face of the most trans-

parent and blooming delicacy, and a pair of broad, black, flashing eyes. In truth, he was dying of a consumption. His comrades called him Papillon.

In contrast both to the coarse villains and the gay one, was the patient female drudge, with her air of household servitude, like a leaden spoon beside a pair of rough and rusty cutlasses and an ornamented dagger, the weapons, to be the more accurate type, all equally stained with blood.

The valises and small packages which had been brought by the travellers from the Diligence, were heaped at one side of the fire, together with several articles of baggage taken by the robbers, who had found the vehicle on the road and pillaged it; and to these was added what plunder the house had afforded. An ancient and

trustworthy member of the band, his eyes half closed, and a naked sabre across his knees, sat upon the pile, and the boldest of his brethren would not have ventured to attempt, in his despite, any malversation of the common property. His face was marked, and rendered more than naturally forbidding by the scar of a deep gash across his cheek and mouth.

The robbers started from their various seats and occupations, and thronged round Arthur and Agatha, with looks of curiosity, insolence, and fury; and almost every one of them swore his peculiar oath, while he examined their countenances, and spoke of the death of him who had been slain in the chapel. One of them snatched the handkerchief from the bosom of the nun, who bent on him a glance of severe modesty, while Arthur

involuntarily clenched and raised his hand: His wrists were instantly tied, and immediate vengeance would have been executed on him, but that the supper was declared to be ready.

On the appearance of the meal, the new-found prisoners were commanded to place themselves in a corner of the room, and the leader and one or two others laid their loaded pistols beside their plates, and looking at their two young victims, pointed to the weapons so as sufficiently to indicate the consequences of any attempt at escape. This menace was enforced by one of the ruffians, who lifted the head of Frontin, and showed them his face and the floor beneath drenched in blood.

He had sought to release himself, and his throat had at once been cut by his guard, to save the trouble of further superintendence. The man who exhibited

this spectacle to the eyes of the Englishman and the nun, laughed while he held up by the hair the ghastly head, and then let it fall again a lifeless weight. The blood gushed anew from the gaping wound, and the murderer did not wash it from his hands before he sat down at the table.

The band made a fierce attack on the provisions, which where chiefly three or four broiled fowls, and cubes of boiled beef, like small paving stones, heaping several dishes. To these were added vast and greasy messes of beans, potatoes, and mashed cabbage, with a bucket full of salad in the centre, surrounded by four of the largest omelets that the size of the frying-pan enabled the cooks to manufacture. Bottles of cider, wine, and brandy were scattered upon the table. The banditti sang, jested, swore, boasted of their past exploits, talked of

extravagant schemes for the future, and ridiculed their prisoners. Dumond, however, was supplied with food and wine, and commanded to sing for the amusement of his new companions. He chimed in so accurately with their tastes and habits, that he became a favourite, and began to meditate on the prudence of enrolling himself in the troop.

Meanwhile, Arthur and the nun stood side by side; he with his arms tied and his eyes bent to the ground, she covering her bosom with her hands and looking upwards. Happily the tumult of the brutal revel passed by her like idle air, and she was not recalled from the bright and serene realms of her contemplation, to the actual miseries that surrounded her, by hearing, as other than unmeaning noises, any of the conversation of the robbers.

They had sat at table for about an hour, when half of them rose, took up the portions of the plunder pointed out to them by their leader, and quitted the room. In a few minutes the tramp of horses was heard leaving the court-yard. The remainder of the band seized their pistols; and, after tying the maid-servant and the *conducteur* hand and foot, commanded Dumond, Arthur, and Agatha, to walk with them to the court-yard. The storm had in some degree abated, and several candles and torches were blazing in the more sheltered parts of the area. The horses of the robbers were waiting for them: the party that went before them having carried away the plunder by means of the animals from the *Diligence*, and those belonging to the farmer.

While some of them were disposing

what was left of the spoil on the beasts that were to carry it, and others were preparing those on which they themselves were to ride, two continued to watch over the prisoners. One of these was suddenly called away by their leader; and, at this moment, Arthur touched the arm of Agatha, and exclaimed, "There is hope. I heard a shot!" His countenance brightened for an instant, but fell again when he met the look of the one remaining sentinel, who asked him, with an exulting grin, "Do you know what that is for?" and pointed to a corner of the court-yard. He saw the captain, and one or two others, employed in fastening a long rope to a beam which ran across an angle of the building. Another of the robbers was collecting several candles and tying them together, so as to make two large torches. The



look of his keeper, and the nature of the preparations flashed on the mind of Arthur the recollection of having heard described a kind of torture sometimes resorted to in France, in which the sufferer is so suspended as to endure the pain of hanging, without obtaining the relief of death, while fire is applied to the soles of the feet.

He shuddered and became white at the thought; and Agatha, who could not see the face of the robber, and had not observed what was doing at the other side of the quadrangle, beheld with astonishment the change which came over his features. But her eyes followed the direction of his: the rope suggested to her the probability of their immediate destruction, though she did not estimate with such horrible accuracy as Arthur the nature of the intended atrocity. To

her, indeed, the first thought that occurred was one of satisfaction at the prospect of death. Henceforth the eyes of both were fixed on that ominous corner, which glared through the darkness with an uncertain and changeful light. The laden horses trampling the wet soil, the presence of the busy ruffians, the wide and ruinous building, the turbulent storm itself—all were nothing; and their whole minds were suspended in agony from that massy and fatal beam.

The robbers now left the preparations for their journey, and while some of them joined the group of executioners, others gathered round Arthur, and spoke to him in a tone of insult and merriment. He made them no answer, but continued to look at the proceedings of his murderers. In a few moments the mechanism of torture and ultimate death was complete;

and he was seized by several of his guards, and hurried to the spot which he had been contemplating; while Agatha sank on her knees, and lifted up her clasped hands. The storm grew blacker and wilder, and the rain fell in heavier floods, while they proceeded to take vengeance on him for the death of their comrade. But a strong blast extinguished the lights which they held. An interval of confusion and haste ensued before the torches were again brought from the house. But the robbers then seized anew their unhappy victim, and, amid their triumphant yell, Agatha caught the murmur of his religious ejaculations. The maiden could restrain herself no longer; she sprang forward, exclaimed, "Is there no God in heaven?" pushed aside two of the murderers, snatched a torch from the hand of another, and flinging it to the ground,

set her foot on the blazing wicks. She instantly received a violent blow on the temple, under which she staggered, and must have fallen, had not Papillon caught and supported her.

The torture would immediately have been renewed, but at this moment the furious gallop of a horse was heard, and with the delay of no more than a few seconds, the animal broke into the yard, through the open gateway, and rushed forward till he was scared by the light and crowd. They left the gibbet, and thronged round the panting beast. It was one of the farmer's horses, which had been taken away by the vanguard of the troop. It now returned without a rider; and some of its load still remained fastened to the saddle.

A consultation became necessary, but this proceeding was soon interrupted by

the sound of approaching horsemen, which had been before lost in the noises of the tempest. The robbers supposed that their comrades were returning, in consequence of meeting with opposition; but before many minutes a troop of *gendarmes* were upon them, having already encountered and dispersed their friends. Some of the band resisted, and were cut down or shot. Some were seized. Some endeavoured to pass through the building; and of these, two succeeded in leaping out of the windows,—one of whom broke his neck, and the other, the young and glittering bandit, made his way into the fields, and escaped.

; Dumond addressed himself to the commander of the party; and after being released from his bonds, directed their attention to the nun, and to Arthur. The one was treated with care, and the

other cut down. But before any attempt was made to bring back the animation of either, the functionary exclaimed that the utmost vigilance was to be given to prevent their escape. She was easily revived. But with him the restoration to life was longer and more difficult. They were both put under arrest; and their persons being searched, nothing important was found on either.

The party remained for that night in the building; and in the morning, when the gendarmes were setting out, with Arthur and Agatha in their custody, for the town from which they had come, she found an opportunity of whispering to him: "We shall be examined to-day. You will be set free, and I shall be detained. Do not interrupt me. You can do me no good by remaining here; but you can do me much by going, at Paris, to Jacques

Carron; a shoemaker, behind the church of St. Sulpice, and telling him that Marie Dufourel, from Varille, a village near Dieppe, is in danger, and needs his assistance. Inform him where you leave me; and then forget that you ever heard of the misfortunes of Agatha de Clainville. She will remember your kindness in her prayers."

It was even as she said. He found little difficulty in obtaining his own liberty; but the nun was led to prison, whither she walked with the composure of an unfaltering martyr. Arthur long remembered the look which dignified her rude disguise, and that tranquil majesty of eye and demeanor which, amid the crowd and confusion of the streets, drew many eyes to watch her humble head-dress and dark garments.

END OF VOL. I.









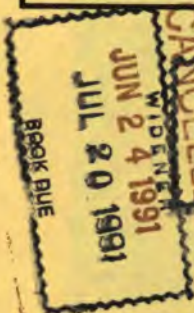






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